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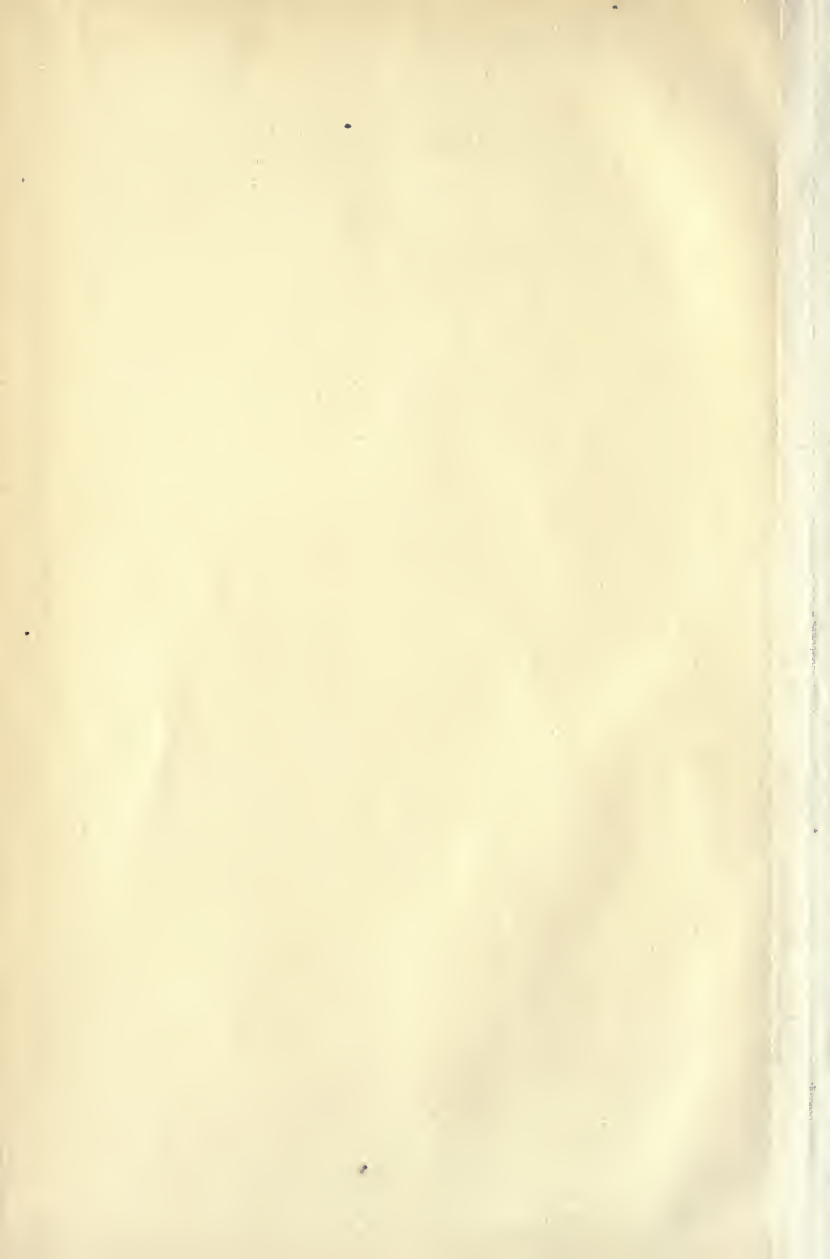
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*A Short History of
The Order of Saint John
of Jerusalem*



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A Short History of
**THE ORDER OF
SAINT JOHN
OF JERUSALEM**

*From its earliest Foundation in A.D. 1014
to the end of the Great War of A.D. 1914-18*

by E. M. TENISON

Author of "Alastair Gordon, R.N." "The Valiant Heart," etc.



181157.

7.6.23

Pro Fide pro utuitate hominum

**LONDON: THE SOCIETY
OF SS. PETER AND PAUL
32 GEORGE STREET, HANOVER SQUARE, W.**

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1922

2nd Edition. 6th Thousand: 1922.

This appreciation
of
the inspiring past and strenuous present
of
A GREAT CHIVALROUS IDEAL
is dedicated
to the memory of
ADELINE DUCHESS OF BEDFORD
Lady of Justice of St. John of Jerusalem
Chairman of the Ladies' Committee
of the Order of St. John
at whose suggestion the first edition was written
during the crucial opening months
of the Great War

Publisher's Note

THE first edition of this work was printed in October 1914 (under the title of "Chivalry and the Wounded"), and four thousand copies carried swiftly to many parts of the Empire a vivid picture of nine centuries of heroic achievement, compressed into one hundred pages. "An excellent book," wrote Field-Marshal Sir Evelyn Wood, V.C.: "few soldiers could have surpassed this narrative of the military exploits of the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem."

This new and enlarged edition, with its concentrated yet comprehensive account of the labours of the Order during the four epic years of the Great War, is further improved by a detailed Index and two illustrations.

S.S.P.P.

1922.

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A Knight of Saint John.
Alberto Arminghieri. by Pinturicchio.

The Hospitallers of St. John of Jerusalem



PART I

IN PALESTINE ; 1014-1187

IN time of peace, the many-sided present and our plans and forecasts for the future may make us forgetful of the past ; but when war reveals us clearly to ourselves, we realize that from the past comes much of our courage, inspiration, and hope.

Long-dead but ever-living heroes are the invisible leaders whose exploits, sacrifices, and achievements spur us into action, and awake in us a spirit of honourable emulation. When they aspired so high, and fought and toiled with such unbroken vigour, such ardent faith, and such unqualified devotion, can we bear to confess that we in comparison are cold and languid ? Rather we would claim that the past, present, and future are all one, and that though " Time destroys the cuirass on which

Inspiration
from the Past.
The inextin-
guishable Spirit
of Chivalry.

the lances and swords were blunted," the eternal spirit of chivalry has never been extinguished, and burns to-day with a bright steady light.

In this connection it is of vital interest to recall the history of the Hospitallers of St. John of Jerusalem—nearly five hundred years of magnificent moral and material achievement, a slow and melancholy decline, and final extinction as a religious and military community; and then in our own day a re-creation of the Order in civilian and lay form.

It was in the early years of the eleventh century that some rich Neapolitan merchants founded and endowed a hospital for the Latin pilgrims who thronged to Jerusalem to pray at the Holy Sepulchre.

Degeneracy and
feebleness of the
Byzantine
Christians.

Vast conquests
by the
Mahomedan
warriors.

Jerusalem long previously had fallen from the nerveless hands of the Byzantine Christians into the grasp of the vigorous Mahomedans, those mighty warriors who had captured Damascus, Antioch, and Syria, and conquered Egypt, Media, Korassan, and Mesopotamia—who had overrun the northern coast of Africa, and in Europe had by the force of their resistless arms won Cyprus, Rhodes, Sicily, Candia, and Malta, and had established themselves as Kings in Spain and Portugal.

Establishment
of a Christian
Hospital in
Mahomedan
Jerusalem, 1014.

The enterprising and benevolent Christian merchants who obtained permission from the Moslem Caliph to build their Hospital in Jerusalem should be remembered as the precursors of the Knights Hospitaller of St. John, whose institutions extended subsequently

throughout the civilized world, and attained a moral distinction and a practical utility which it is hardly possible to over-estimate.

The Hospital was in two sections, one for men and one for women; and all the chief cities in Italy and the South of Europe gave liberal donations for the continued maintenance of this place of refuge for sick or weary pilgrims. During the Saracenic rule the institution was not molested; but when the Saracen Mahomedans after four centuries of dominion were in their turn overpowered by the ferocious Turcomans from beyond the Caspian Sea, a most disastrous epoch was inaugurated for all the Christians.

Jerusalem
Captured by the
Turcomans,
1065.

Under early mediaeval conditions of transport, a pilgrimage to Jerusalem had never been an easy undertaking; but during the Turcoman *régime* it became fraught with incalculable dangers; and the few pilgrims who survived to return to Europe bore witness to the hideous tortures and revolting cruelties which unoffending Christians suffered at the hands of the barbarian conquerors.

Sufferings of the
Christians.

Thus it was that indignation on behalf of the pilgrims led to the Crusades, which were to be such an important factor in the history of mediaeval civilization.

An attempted Crusade led by Peter the Hermit failed tragically, for Peter—though he had been a knight—lacked military ability. But his followers did not die in vain, for their sufferings and overthrow aroused the Latin nations.

Failure of
Peaceful
Crusade under
Peter the
Hermit.

First Military
Crusade under
Godfrey de
Bouillon, Duke
of Lower
Lorraine and
Marquis of
Antwerp.

In 1099 the flower of Christian chivalry, an allied army speaking sixteen different languages, and composed of 600,000 Horse and 100,000 Foot, advanced from Constantinople; and after capturing in rapid succession Nicea, Antioch, Tarsus, and Edessa, the Crusaders on June the 7th appeared before the walls of Jerusalem and summoned the Turcoman Governor to surrender.

Siege of
Jerusalem. Im-
prisonment of
the Rector of
the Hospital by
Turcoman
Governor.

This personage retaliated by thrusting into prison all the Christians within the city, amongst them the Rector of the Hospital of St. John, the saintly and generous Peter Gérard, who had extended his services as freely to sick "infidels" as to his friends and fellow Christians.

While Gérard languished helplessly in a foul dungeon, echoes of the terrific combat must have reached him. The Turks were making a resistance so prolonged and stubborn that they seemed invincible; and the Christian soldiers would have been most grievously disheartened but for the unbreakable valour and resolution of their leaders, Godfrey de Bouillon, Tancred, and Raymond of Toulouse.

Heroism of
Crusading
Leaders.

The Barons and Captains, to give example to their men, put themselves always to the fore in places of the greatest danger. . . . And women, who could bear no arms, ran with jars of water to the assaulting host and gave them to drink, admonishing them the while to serve our Lord with all their might.*

A procession of pilgrims went fasting to the

* Chronicle of William of Tyre, ch. clxxxiii.

Mount of Olivet, and "in much great anguish" poured out their hearts in prayer for the deliverance of Jerusalem.

At last, on the morning of Friday, July the 19th, after six weeks siege, the entire Christian host felt "marvellous boldness," for a saintly hermit from Mount Olivet had seen in a vision that "this same day Our Lord would help his soldiers" and crown with victory their arduous and exhausting struggle.*

Thus inspirited, they carried the city by storm; and Godfrey de Bouillon—the gallant Commander-in-Chief—was the first to hoist his banner on the battlements.

Then came a heavy reckoning for the Turcomans. The torturers of Christian pilgrims were held to deserve no mercy:

Much blood was shed . . . and the streets of the town were covered with dead men—in such wise that it was great pity to see, had they not been of the enemies of Our Lord Jesus Christ.†

As the surrounding country was still swarming with armed enemies, the conquerors, vigilant even in the first flush of triumph, set guards to keep the gates and watch from the battlements. Then the victorious leaders laid aside their armour, and walked barefoot to the Holy Sepulchre, in ecstasy of solemn joy and thanksgiving.

Godfrey de Bouillon was elected King of Jerusalem; but, though he accepted the

Storming of
Jerusalem,
Triumph of
Godfrey de
Bouillon,
19 July 1099.

* Chronicle of William of Tyre, ch. clxxxiv.

† *Ibid.*, ch. clxxxvi.

responsibility, he refused the title, saying that he would never wear a crown of gold where his Saviour had worn a crown of thorns.

Then came a period of peace and prosperity for the Hospitallers. Duke Godfrey, expressing fervent appreciation of their skill and devotion in tending the wounded, endowed them with the revenues of one of his richest manors in Brabant—an example followed by a number of the other Frankish noblemen.

Thus encouraged and supported, the Rector Gérard organized the Hospitallers into a regularly constituted religious Order, to be clad in a black habit adorned with a white cross of eight points. Branch hospitals were established in many of the maritime provinces of Europe, so that pilgrims could be sheltered and tended while awaiting transport to the Holy Land.

In 1113 the Pope formally recognized the Order. Five years afterwards the saintly Rector died, and was succeeded by Raymond du Puy, a French noble, distinguished, vigorous, and clear-sighted. He pointed out to the brethren that it did not suffice to live piously and give medical aid to pilgrims. Considering the continued power and energy of the Moslems, and the constant dangers still menacing all Christian travellers, the Hospitallers should not only be ready to live in the service of invalids and pilgrims, but willing if necessary to die in their defence. *"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends"*; and

Duke Godfrey praises the Hospitallers and endows them richly, 1099.

The Hospitallers organized as a Religious Order, 1099.

Branch Hospitals Established in Europe.

Raymond du Puy, first Grand Master of the Order, 1118.

Continued Dangers to Pilgrims; the Military Order of St. John founded in their defence, 1118.

—taking a lesson from the past, when the Byzantine Christians so ignominiously lost Jerusalem because their courage and vitality had waned—Raymond du Puy adjured his followers to pledge themselves not only to chastity and obedience as hitherto, but also vow to support the cause of Christianity even to the last drop of their blood.

Thus was founded the world-famous Order of the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem, destined to become the bulwark of Christendom, an Order whose gallant exploits and strenuous achievements form one of the most brilliant and heroic chapters in the history of the world.

The Order was reconstructed with three divisions:—Knights of Justice, Chaplains, and Serving Brothers. There were also Dames of St. John; and in France, England, Italy, and Spain, and subsequently in Portugal, they founded and supervised hospitals in which the poor and needy could meet with tender and compassionate care and service. The Knights and Dames were required to be of noble birth; and it is typical of the spirit of chivalry that membership of this Order “*for the service of mankind*” was an honour for which the proudest and most famous families competed eagerly. Great feudal lords, many of them in the prime of life and endowed with every worldly advantage—wealth, strength, power, and remarkable abilities—did not hesitate to pledge themselves to perpetual celibacy, and to renounce their personal

“Men for War,
Men for Prayer,
Men for Work.”

The Dames of
St. John, their
devoted services
to the sick and
poor.

Zeal of Chris-
tian Knights
and Ladies for
the service of
mankind.

property, devoting to the Order all their revenues. (Very wide of the truth is the current notion that philanthropy is a modern invention!)

Chivalry, the readiness of the strong to protect the weak.

The Rule of the Order of St. John was so austere that it may seem a counsel of perfection. Sometimes the reality fell short of the ideal. But the European recognition of an ideal founded upon self-sacrifice, and embodying the essential principle of chivalry—the readiness of the strong to protect the weak—redeemed an age when otherwise brutality and cruelty would have prevailed throughout the world.

If we compare the Jerusalem of Nero's day with the Jerusalem of the Knights of St. John, it becomes obvious that Christian chivalry had been an enormous force in the moral progress of the human race.

So brilliant had been the series of victories gained by the leaders of the first Crusade, so vigorous and valiant were the Knights and men-at-arms, that it seemed as if they would consolidate their conquests. But early in the following century the elements of disunion crept into the camp, and gradually but surely undermined the very foundations of the Christian rule.

Vigorous service and deserved renown of the Knights Hospitaller.

The Knights Hospitaller formed an honourable exception; they showed unbroken loyalty to their faith, their Order, and their beloved Grand Master. But their merited renown aroused a widespread jealousy, such jealousy as mediocre men are all too apt to feel to-

wards heroes whose ardent service and austere self-sacrifice appear a tacit reproach to every idler, egoist, or political adventurer.

The promoters of the second Crusade, Conrad of the Germanic States, Louis VII of France, and the Greek Emperor Manuel Comnenus, looked grudgingly upon the exploits and the prestige of the Military Orders, and, instead of following up the advantages gained by the Hospitallers and their rivals the Knights Templar, these misguided monarchs fell to disputing the division of spoils which they were never destined to obtain. Their undignified animosities led to the vain sacrifice of 150,000 men, and the lowering of the Christian reputation throughout the East.

Second
Crusade, 1149.
Disputes and
animosity
among the
Leaders.

The wane and final extinction of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem makes melancholy reading, the more melancholy because its lessons are of universal significance, and are as applicable now as on the lamentable day when—near the sacred Lake Tiberias—the Hospitallers were destined to die gallantly, willingly, heroically, for the cause they had been powerless to save.

Ignominious
end of the
Second
Crusade, 1149.

In 1152 they succeeded in preventing Jerusalem from falling back into the hands of Moslem warriors; but the disaster was postponed, not finally averted.

In 1152 the
Knights
Hospitallers save
Jerusalem from
reconquest by
the Saracens.

In the Sultan Saladin they had an adversary who not only was endowed with rare intellectual abilities and brilliant military genius, but was further inspired by religious ardour; "Jerusalem," he subsequently wrote to

Religious and
political ambi-
tions of Saladin.

Richard Cœur de Lion, "is as much to us Mahomedans as it can be to you Christians, and more. It is the place whence our Prophet made his night ascent to Heaven, and it will be the gathering place of our Nation at the Great Judgment."

To win back Jerusalem was Saladin's supreme ambition, and to this end he made ready—devoting his whole heart and mind to preparation for the day when Christian dissension would make it possible for him to strike the decisive blow.


Meantime, King Baldwin IV of Jerusalem, though only about twenty years of age, was so shattered by the ravages of leprosy that he could no longer bear the burden of his kingly office. On abdicating, he appointed his infant nephew Baldwin his successor; and an old chronicler relates how

Coronation of
Baldwin V,
Christian King
of Jerusalem,
November 1st,
1183.

the King bade crown the child; so they took him to the Holy Sepulchre and crowned him. And because the child was so small they put him into the arms of a Knight to be carried into the Temple of the Lord.

Count Raymond
of Tripoli,
Regent for the
Infant King.

But, mindful of the warning, "*Woe to the land whose King is a child,*" Baldwin IV chose as Regent his kinsman Count Raymond of Tripoli, Lord of Tiberias, one of the very few who still clung faithfully to the old ideals of chivalrous devotion, and held himself haughtily aloof from base indulgences and paltry self-interested intrigues.

 Son of Count Raymond I of Tripoli, and of Odierna, that beautiful Princess whose

"great excellence and virtue" are commemorated in one of the most romantic of mediaeval traditions,* Raymond II was destined to a troubled life and tragic death. His father had been assassinated by a Saracen fanatic; but for Raymond was reserved the still more melancholy fate of being betrayed by one of his own race and world.

Among the various aspirants to the crown of Jerusalem was a certain Guy de Lusignan—Guy de Lusignan.a Frankish knight of ancient family but mediocre ability—who, unhappily for his fellow Crusaders, was more concerned in forwarding his personal ambition than in working for the glory of Christianity.

Count Raymond of Tripoli—who (through his mother) was grandson of King Baldwin II, and (on his father's side) the representative of Raymond of Toulouse, one of the heroes of the first siege of Jerusalem—was a probable candidate for the crown if the feeble life of little Baldwin V were to flicker out. Guy de Lusignan therefore set to work to sow distrust of Raymond—an undertaking in which he was deplorably successful.

Clear-sighted, outspoken, and uncompromising, Raymond was too sincere to flatter, too haughty to dissemble, and too proud to compete against Guy's unchivalrous arts of insinuation and suggestion.

The increasing degeneracy of the Christians at this period is denounced in the plainest

* "The Lady of Tripoli," by Michael J. Barrington (1910).

language by a contemporary chronicler, Geoffrey de Vinsauf:

Degeneracy of
Christians.

In the year of the Incarnate Word 1187, when Urban III held the government of the Apostolic See, and Frederick was Emperor of Germany, when Isaac was reigning at Constantinople, Philip in France, Henry in England, and William in Sicily, the Lord's hand fell heavy upon his people, if indeed it is right to call *his* people those whom . . . the foulness of their vices had alienated from his favour . . . Corruption became so diffused throughout the land of Syria that other nations now drew an example of uncleanness from the same source which formerly had supplied them with the elements of spiritual truth. For this cause, therefore, the Lord, seeing the land of his birth and passion sunk into an abyss of turpitude, . . . suffered Saladin to put forth his might to the destruction of an unworthy people. . . .

Eclipses,
Famines,
Storms, Earth-
quakes, and
Prophecies of
War.

The approaching disaster was heralded by divers strange events, famine, earthquakes, and eclipses both of the Sun and of the Moon; and by . . . a mighty wind that shook the earth, foreshadowing the lamentable wars and griefs which were to harass and afflict the world.

Death of
Baldwin V.
Coronation of
Guy de
Lusignan.

The death of the fragile child-King, the organized election of Guy de Lusignan as King of Jerusalem, and the retirement of Raymond to his own estates, formed the prologue to the tragic struggle in which Lusignan's complacent incompetence was fated to bring about an irretrievable disaster.

In 1187 Saladin judged the time had come to lay siege to Acre, the chief seaport of Christian Syria. Here again the military Orders, Templars and Hospitallers, proved how unimpaired was their high standard of efficiency and valour. A night attack from

the Hospitallers surprised and scattered the forces of Saladin; and, though the Mahomedans made a vigorous rally and fought like lions, the Hospitallers compelled them to abandon the siege. The victory was gained at an enormous cost of life, and among the dead lay the heroic Grand Master.

Successful
Defence of Acre
by the Knights
Hospitaller.
Death of the
Grand Master.

The Moslems too had lost heavily; but whereas the Christian armies were disunited even in success, their adversary Saladin was gifted with that power of control and that magnetic charm which enables a general to keep up the courage and ardour of his followers even in defeat. His triumph was not long to be deferred. Beaten back from Acre, he marched rapidly on Tiberias, the capital of Galilee. The townsfolk yielded almost at once, but the garrison, inspired and commanded by the heroic Countess of Tripoli, resolutely held the citadel.

The Countess of
Tripoli heroically holds the
Fortress of
Tiberias after
Saladin has
entered the
City.

The Christian forces, led by Guy de Lusignan, then mustered at Sappharia, three miles north of Nazareth and seventeen east of Acre. Excepting perhaps the Templars and Hospitallers, there seems to have been only one amongst them endowed with military discernment, and this was Raymond, Count of Tripoli. To the amazement of the Council of War, he opposed their plan of marching immediately to the rescue of his Countess in the beleaguered stronghold.

Disinterested
Advice of
Raymond of
Tripoli.

Though an attacking force usually has the advantage, he pleaded that the peculiar circumstances demanded a defensive line of

action, at a moment when it would be folly rather than valour to hazard the fate of Syrian Christendom upon a single battle under conditions so disadvantageous. Tiberias was sixteen miles across a desolate hill-district now devoid of water, and Count Raymond maintained that to march the army by that drought-stricken route would be to court disaster. On the other hand, to wait at Sappharia, where food and water were abundant, and to lure Saladin to attack the Christians in a position of their own selecting, was obviously the wisest strategy.

"Even if I lose my wife, retainers and city," said Raymond, "so be it. Rather would I endure this calamity than see the entire country fall back under Saracen rule."

Disastrous
result of King
Guy's Jealousy.

Had King Guy been able to forego his jealousy of Raymond, victory might yet have crowned the Christian arms; but he encouraged the Barons to denounce Count Raymond as a "traitor," and at dawn he gave the fatal order to set out for Tiberias.

On the march, the Franks were harassed incessantly by Saracen skirmishers and horse-bowmen; and suffering acutely (as Raymond had predicted) from heat and thirst, they were dispirited and drooping before they even came within sight of Saladin's main force.

The advance had manifestly been a hideous blunder; but, as it was too late to retreat, Count Raymond implored King Guy to press on as rapidly as possible. The Lake of Tiberias, he said, was now only three or four

miles distant, and must certainly be reached before nightfall if the army was to slake its thirst and be in fit condition to attack the besiegers of the city on the morrow. But Guy, incorrigibly perverse, halted the entire force and gave the command to encamp for the night. There was no food and not a drop of water.

"Alas," said Raymond, "the war is ended; we are delivered over to death, and the realm is ruined."

Then under cover of darkness the foe came up, and all night poured their hail of arrows in upon the weary Franks: "God fed the Christians with the bread of affliction and gave them to drink without stint of the cup of repentance till the dawn of tribulation came again."*

Next morning Guy sounded trumpets for the advance, but the situation was irretrievable. Saladin's hosts encircled the doomed Christians on all sides; and though Count Raymond's vanguard and the Hospitallers and Templars did all that mortal men could do to conquer in the face of fearful odds, the enemy had so signal an advantage in generalship, position, and numbers, that only one result was possible.

Before sunset King Guy was a prisoner in Saladin's camp.

A prisoner also was Count Raymond. And whereas Guy, whose folly caused the terrible

Battle of
Tiberias.
Crushing Defeat
of the Christian
Army under
Guy de
Lusignan, 1187.

* Chronicles of Ralph of Coggeshall, p. 223.

Death of
Raymond of
Tripoli.

disaster, was destined to survive and be crowned King of Cyprus, Raymond, who had foreseen and done his utmost to prevent the ruin of the Christian force, did not live long after its downfall. He died of a broken heart within a few weeks of the fatal battle. More sympathetic than King Guy, the victorious Sultan gave to his captive the admiration one gallant warrior feels for another, and granted a safe-conduct to the Countess of Tripoli that she might comfort her lord during his sorrowful last hours.

Heroism of the
Knights
Hospitaller.

As for the Hospitallers, their newly-elected Grand Master was mortally wounded, and the defeated Knights fulfilled their vow to shed the last drop of their blood in defence of their faith. Saladin offered them freedom, wealth, and glory if they would renounce the Cross. They answered they would choose rather to die. And he took them at their word.

Surrender of
Jerusalem to
Saladin.

Then came hordes of Parthians, Bedouins, Medes, Arabs, and Egyptians, to swell the already enormous armies of the conqueror; and Jerusalem, after only twelve days' resistance, capitulated to the warriors of the triumphant Sultan.

The golden cross was taken down from the Temple, and, after eighty-eight years of Christian guardianship, the Sepulchre of Christ fell once more into the hands of the Mahomedans.

PART II

IN PALESTINE: 1187—1291

IN his hour of complete triumph, Saladin showed a degree of mercy rare in Oriental conquerors. After allowing the garrison to march out with the honours of war, he permitted the few Knights Hospitaller who had remained in Jerusalem to ransom the poor townsfolk, who otherwise would have been sold into slavery; and he granted the request of the Hospitallers that ten of their number should wait in the city until their sick and wounded were sufficiently healed to bear the hazard and fatigue of transit.

It was a sorrowful day when the Knights and Chaplains and the Serving Brethren were obliged to abandon the stately buildings which for seventy years had been the home of their Order and a haven of refuge for many sufferers. Their beautiful Church of St. John the Baptist was converted by the Saracens into a madhouse; the Church of St. Mary Magdalen fell into ruins; and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre became a Mahomedan mosque.

Greatly diminished in numbers—for the majority had fallen at Tiberias—much reduced in riches, for (as we have seen) their *bezants* and *crusados* had been poured out freely to

Saladin allows the Knights Hospitaller to save the poor from Slavery, and tend the Sick and Wounded.

The Order of the Hospitallers expelled from Jerusalem.

Re-founding of
the Hospital at
Margat.

redeem the captured citizens from slavery—the Hospitallers conveyed their sick to Margat, a town still held by Christian forces, and re-established the convent and hospital as far as their straitened exchequer would allow.

The Ladies of the Order, under the altered circumstances, decided to return to Europe and carry on the work in branch establishments. They met with widespread sympathy and assistance, Henry II granting them extensive lands in Somerset, and the Queen of Arragon welcoming them at Saragossa.

The Emperor
Frederick
Barbarossa
sends a
challenge to
Saladin.

The news of the fall of Jerusalem excited horror throughout Europe, and aroused the Germanic Emperor Frederick Barbarossa to take the Cross and gather together his vast array of vassals. In the twelfth century the etiquette of Christian chivalry was precise, and Barbarossa sent a herald to Saladin,—for “the Imperial Majesty never assails anyone without sending a defiance, and always gives notice of war to his enemies.”*

But the valiant old Emperor died of the hardships of the journey, and the command of his army fell to his second son, the Duke of Suabia.

At this time King Guy de Lusignan, whom the magnanimous Saladin had released after only twelve months imprisonment, was laying siege to Acre, which had been lost to the Christians after the fall of Jerusalem.

For more than two years he had beleaguered

* Vinsauf's "Itinerary of Richard I," Book I, ch. xviii.

the city in vain. Its fortifications were of colossal strength, and it was garrisoned by Turks and Thracians—nine thousand seasoned warriors. Even when King Philip of France and Leopold, Duke of Austria, brought their large armies to his aid, the Moslems still held out. But the situation was entirely changed by the arrival of Richard Cœur de Lion and the English Crusaders. Richard, the ablest of strategists, the most skilled military engineer of his time, and the most inspiring leader—with his sappers and miners, his archers and men-at-arms, and, above all, his wonderful personal magnetism—put new life into the weary Christian army. Though a severe illness smote him down in the midst of the contest, “he caused himself to be carried on a silken bed, to honour the enemy with his presence, and animate his men to fight,” and from his bed he aimed so unerringly with his crossbow that “he slew many with darts and arrows.”

The prolonged and arduous struggle ended by the capitulation of Acre after three years' resistance.

The Knights of St. John then established their Hospital in the conquered city, and set up once more the altars which the Turks had overthrown.

Immediately King Richard “turned his attention to the repair of the walls to a greater height and perfection than before they were thrown down; and he himself walked about, exhorting the workmen and masons.”

The Third
Crusade, 1191.

King Richard I
of England
arrives at Acre,
1191.

Capitulation of
Acre to Richard
Cœur de Lion.

The Hospital
re-established,
1191.

Ardour and
energy of
Richard Cœur
de Lion.

Of all the Western warriors, Richard Cœur de Lion not only was the ablest commander by land and sea, but the most fiery and fervent Crusader; and he possessed the power of infusing into his soldiers something of the same ardour which burnt so brightly in his own soul. During the strenuous and exhausting campaign he again and again renewed the hopes of men whose energies had flagged and whose spirits were breaking under continued hardship and privation. On one occasion he was adjured to abandon some of his horsemen who were being cut off by the enemy: "Better let them perish," said his advisers, "than expose your person and all Christendom to certain danger."

Then King Richard changed colour with indignation at these words, and spoke quickly in reply: "If I neglect to aid my men whom I sent forward with a promise to support them, I shall never again deserve to be called King." He said no more, but, spurring his horse, dashed into the middle of the Turks, . . . and brandishing his sword, he carved his way into the thickest ranks. . . . The enemy were slain and scattered, and our men returned with several prisoners into camp.*

* Vinsauf's "Itinerary of Richard I," Book IV, ch. xxxi. Although King Richard spent little time in England, and was by blood more Norman than English, he is on a gigantic scale the prototype of the British officer of the old Army. The devotion and confidence which his men-at-arms felt for him, their conviction he would never fail them, never ask of them anything he was not prepared to do himself, bears vivid resemblance to the faith of Tommy Atkins in his leaders. A great British General was asked the secret of his power over his men and consequent success in action. He replied in one word—"Sympathy."

But whereas the humbler ranks throughout the army almost worshipped Richard, he was regarded by the sovereign princes with bitterest and most vehement jealousy. Saladin, his mortal foe, whose dominions he invaded and whose power he threatened, expressed ungrudging admiration for his consistent strength and prowess; but the Christian Kings, his allies, thwarted him at every turn. Rather than allow the glory of the capture of Jerusalem to fall to him—as it assuredly would have done, for he was the one military genius in their midst—they insisted upon crying out for “peace” just at the crucial moment when success was within view. Richard—who in every danger had been “the first to advance and the last to retreat,” and whose exploits at the battle of Arsouf had seemed to his adversaries something “more than human”—was helpless in the face of French, Italian, and Austrian intrigues.

All that mortal man could do to make the Allies follow up his victory he did; but did in vain.

The Knights Hospitaller (who were of many different nationalities) had given him their strong support; and, “bold as lions,” they were eager to regain possession of their Hospital and churches in the Holy City; but even with the Knights Hospitaller of St. John, the English Knights and men-at-arms were too reduced in number for it to be possible that they alone should storm the mighty fortifications of Saracen Jerusalem.

Great Victory of
Richard Cœur
de Lion at
Arsouf, 1191.

Eagerness of
the Hospitallers
to regain the
Holy City.

The Allies
basely desert
King Richard
and thus prevent
the Christian
recapture of
Jerusalem.

The Latin and Teutonic armies—to their lasting dishonour—deserted in vast hordes to their ships; and it was Richard who protected the Syrian Christians by winning from Saladin a promise to leave them unmolested for three years, and give them peaceful access to the Sepulchre at Jerusalem. The English King said frankly that when the truce was ended he hoped to come back and renew the war. Saladin replied that if Allah indeed had destined him to lose the realm, he would better endure to lose it to King Richard than to any other man in all the world.

Then Richard embarked,

The prayer of
Richard Cœur
de Lion.

and all the night his ship ran on her way by the light of the stars. When morning dawned, the King looked back with yearning eyes upon the land, and prayed aloud: "O Christ, grant me life and time to return and deliver thy Holy Tomb!"

But another fate awaited him: shipwreck, betrayal, captivity, and unspeakable bitterness of spirit:

Shame be it said that one whom no enemy could resist, nor the whole force of Saladin could conquer, was seized and kept a prisoner in Germany.*

The jealous hatred his former allies had felt against him did not end with the Crusade. Nor did the respect and admiration of his Saracen enemies; many generations after his tragic death their chroniclers and poets still recalled his gallant exploits, and acclaimed him as the strongest, bravest, and most noble adversary their race had ever known.

* Vinsauf's "Itinerary," Book VI, ch. xxxvii.

After the departure of King Richard, the Knights Hospitaller, with their Chaplains and the Serving Brethren, continued at Margat the work for which the Order had originally been founded in Jerusalem. They tended the sick and poor, protected the Christian pilgrims, gave hospitality to travelling European merchants, and toiled with unremitting zeal "in the service of mankind."

The Hospital at Margat.

They were not, however, always able to refrain from serious quarrels with the Knights Templar; and after the capture of Damietta by King Andrew of Hungary, the differences and animosities of these two rival Military Orders were almost as evident as the disunion between the other sections of the army. The conquest therefore proved of short duration.

Capture of Damietta by Andrew, King of Hungary. Disunion among Christians, and consequent loss of Damietta.

In 1228 Frederick II, that most Oriental of Western Emperors, landed in Palestine. Excommunicated by the Pope, and accused of Mahomedan sympathies, his Crusading zeal was questioned; but as he was a famous warrior, the Saracens—who had considerably declined in energy since the death of Saladin—offered no opposition to his advance. On the mere strength of his reputation and the size and discipline of his army he secured an advantageous treaty, by which Bethlehem, Nazareth, and Jaffa were restored to Christian rule. But though before his return to his own domains the Emperor caused himself to be crowned King of Jerusalem in the Mosque of Omar, as well as in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, "there was [in the church] no

Crusade of Frederick II of Germany, 1228. His large and formidable army; moral effect of its presence in Palestine.

Empty title of King of Jerusalem; the Hospitallers refuse to be present at his Coronation, 1229.

prelate, nor priest, nor clerk to sing or speak"—and the Military Orders refused to be present at the coronation of an excommunicated Emperor whose claims the Pope did not recognize.

The Crusade of Richard, Duke of Cornwall, 1240. Conspicuous services of the Hospitallers.

In the subsequent successful Crusade of the royal Duke Richard of Cornwall, the Hospitallers were honourably conspicuous; and expended both money and personal service in repairing the dismantled fortifications of Jerusalem, after Duke Richard had wrested the city from the control of the Egyptian Sultan. But before the work could be completed, a terrible horde of barbarians from the Caspian shores swept down upon Palestine.

Fortifications of Jerusalem weakened; barbarian hordes choose this moment for invasion of Palestine.

The Knights of the White Cross and the Red realized the magnitude of the danger and were prepared to meet it; but they were thwarted by the Patriarch of Jerusalem, who took upon himself the responsibility of advising a line of action entirely opposed to the opinions of experienced soldiers. The result was a disaster more overwhelming even than the battle of Tiberias. Saladin had been an honourable foe, but the wild Korasmins were amenable to no rules of war. In Jerusalem they spared neither age nor sex, but doomed the entire population. And by the devilish stratagem of hoisting the Christian standard on the battlements, they decoyed into the city all the fugitives and stragglers from the surrounding countryside—then fell upon them like wild beasts and murdered them with savage joy.

Capture of Jerusalem by the barbarians. Terrible fate of the inhabitants.

The Hospitallers and Templars fought to the utmost of mortal strength. Laying aside their jealousies, their only rivalry was which of the two Orders should show the greatest valour. At Gaza, horde after horde of barbarians rolled down upon them in enormous masses; and though they fought for two days and two nights with almost superhuman resolution, they were finally overcome by sheer weight of numbers. Both Grand Masters fell sword in hand, and at the end of the battle only thirty Templars and sixteen Hospitallers were alive to capitulate.

Almost super-human courage of Military Orders; defeat but not dishonour.

In August, 1244, the news of this appalling disaster penetrated to France, where Louis IX, most saintly of French monarchs, was thought to be on his deathbed. Reviving as if by a miracle, the King took the Cross, and gathered together by degrees an enormous army. Chartering Genoese and Venetian merchant galleys, in 1248 he embarked at Aigues Morts and sailed *via* Cyprus to Egypt. Beginning his campaign auspiciously by the recapture of Damietta, had he pressed on rapidly he might have surprised and overthrown the enemy. But he made the fatal mistake of hesitating for several months, which gave the Egyptians time to mobilize all their forces.* The disastrous battle of Mansourah, the King's conspicuous bravery, his capture by the Saracens, and the terrible sufferings of his army, wasted by disease and

Saint Louis of France takes the Cross, 1244.

Capture of Damietta, 1248.

Battle of Mansourah; Defeat of the Christians; great bravery of the French King.

* Napoleon's criticism of the campaign.

semi-starvation, have all been graphically described by the gallant Sire de Joinville, his devoted friend and vassal, who shared his perils, glory, and misery.

Generosity of
the Hospitallers.

When King Louis in ransom for himself and his army agreed to pay the Sultan the enormous sum of 800,000 golden bezants, it was the Hospitallers who placed their entire treasury at his disposal.

King Louis IX
refortifies Acre
for the Hos-
pitallers before
returning to
France.

Forced to conclude a most disadvantageous treaty of peace, Louis and the broken remnants of his army made their way to Acre. There—at the urgent entreaty of the Hospitallers—they lingered four years, and did not sail for France until they had so strengthened the fortifications of the famous city that it seemed impregnable.

Bitter anim-
osity and open
enmity between
Templars and
Hospitallers.

After the departure of King Louis, the ever-smouldering animosity between the Templars and the Hospitallers flared up anew, and, though sworn to draw sword only against “the adversaries of Christ,” yet to the scandal of Christendom they decided their quarrel in a pitched battle. The Hospitallers were victorious; but both Orders shared the just retribution for turning their arms against each other instead of against the foe; for they subsequently lost Azotus, Antioch, Laodicea, and Karac, from sheer lack of adequate numbers to continue holding them against the Moslems.

Disastrous
results of fra-
tricial strife.

Second Crusade
of Saint Louis.
His death at
Tunis, August
25th, 1270.

Nor did the Second Crusade of Louis of France enable them to win back their lost possessions, for its course was diverted into

Africa, and on August 25th, 1270, amidst the fever-breeding swamps of Tunis, the King breathed his last, lying upon ashes and praying God to "sanctify and watch over" his people.

Reft of their leader, and decimated by pestilence, the French Crusaders made peace without awaiting the arrival of Prince Edward of England,* who was relying upon their co-operation.

The landing of the English army at Acre awakened the drooping hopes of the Knights Hospitaller for the reconquest of Jerusalem. These hopes seemed destined to fulfilment; but just as Edward's exploits were beginning to remind the Saracens that he was of the blood of Richard Cœur de Lion, he was struck down by the poisoned dagger of an assassin.

His wound appearing likely to be fatal, he summoned the Grand Masters of the Temple and the Hospital to witness his will.

There were ardent prayers to St. John for his recovery; and he rallied and by degrees regained his strength. But before he could resume the field against the Saracens, news of grave disturbances in England broke in upon his project for the conquest of the Holy City. Intending to return—but never fated to fulfil this cherished wish—he took reluctant leave of the Knights Hospitaller and set sail for home.

For the Hospitallers in Palestine his departure marked the beginning of the end.

Arrival at Acre of Prince Edward and the English Army.

Prince Edward wounded by an assassin. Grand Masters of the Military Orders witness his will, June 18th, 1272.

Departure of Prince Edward for England.

* Subsequently King Edward I.

The final catastrophe—of which there had been sinister foreshadowings—was ultimately brought about through the degeneracy, moral and physical, of the motley population of Acre.

Acre, the headquarters of the Hospitallers, its beautiful buildings and lawless inhabitants.

At this time the metropolis of Christianity in the East, Acre was famous for its wealth and beauty; contemporary chroniclers never tire of describing its many churches with their gem-like stained-glass windows, its pure-white marble palaces, sweet-scented gardens, and cool spacious courtyards. They eulogize the broad and stately streets, across which stretched embroidered canopies and silken awnings tempering the bright light of the sun. But the population thronging in these streets was reminiscent of the Tower of Babel. Of seventeen conflicting races, each speaking a different tongue, amenable to different laws, and acknowledging no community of interests, these people showed all the worst symptoms of combined Eastern and Western decadence.

Some unwarrantable acts of brigandage, committed by these so-called Christians against Moslems in the neighbouring districts, provoked the Sultan to demand proper reparation. His requests were so entirely reasonable, and the offenders so manifestly in the wrong, that the Grand Masters of the Military Orders emphasized the need for prompt atonement. They also pointed out that the Sultan's army was of enormous strength and number, and that to refuse his just demands would be impolitic. The citi-

zens, debased, depraved, and incorrigibly wanton, accused these Knights of "cowardice," and sent an insolent defiance to the Sultan.

Precisely as the Hospitallers had feared, the Sultan saw in this affront a pretext for the overthrow of the last stronghold of Syrian Christianity. Hearing that he had mustered 160,000 Foot and 60,000 Horse, the Military Orders took pity on the unworthy citizens, and put the women and children on board some of the galleys of the Order, in charge of seamen competent to take them to the island of Cyprus, the nearest place of refuge.

Beaujeu, Grand Master of the Temple, who by common consent had assumed the supreme command, had made preparations for a protracted siege before the attacking army was in sight. Indignantly he repelled an attempt of the Sultan's General to make him betray the city for an enormous sum in gold. Then the contest began; and, after a terrific struggle, it was the Hospitallers, under Villiers, their Grand Master, who succeeded in driving back the Moslem hordes even after their battalions had actually stormed the ramparts.

But this was the last gleam of success before the final crushing overthrow. After a renewed and furious series of assaults from the enraged and baffled enemy, the fortress was carried at last over the dead bodies of Knights of the White Cross and the Red, who fought until they fell. Grand Master Beaujeu of the Temple was among the slain.

Citizens flout expert military advice.

Siege of Acre by the Sultan, 1291.

Templars and Hospitallers have now no rivalry except which shall be the bravest.

Storming of
Acre by the
Sultan's Army.
Splendid
courage of the
Grand Master
of the
Hospitallers.

An ever-mem-
orable exploit.

Then at the very last—as the enemy was pouring into the city, and the streets ran rivers of blood—Villiers, Grand Master of the Hospital, performed a feat which won him imperishable glory.

The surviving Knights were few and almost fainting with exhaustion; but Villiers—who had led them out in a last desperate sortie—prayed fervently that they should yet uphold the banner and traditions of their Order.

Rallying them with inspiring words and dauntless resolution, he made them cut their way through to his galley at anchor in the harbour. From the decks his archers kept up a volley of arrows against the Moslem squadron which strove to cut off the retreat of these the last survivors of the once-great Christian army.

As the ship weighed anchor, and turned its golden prow towards Cyprus, the favouring wind which filled its purple sails wafted from the receding shore exultant yells of the ferocious conquerors revelling in the stricken city.

And so the Hospitallers departed from the Holy Land, ruined and defeated—but ever unshaken in faith, unbroken in courage, and eager to hand on the Torch.



PART III

IN CYPRUS AND RHODES: 1291—1522

CYPRUS—that vine-clad island which the ancient Greeks after the Trojan war had wrested from Phœnician settlers—had fallen in turn to Ethiopian, Assyrian, Egyptian, even Persian conquerors, before the Roman legions mastered it. After the wreck of Rome by the barbarian hosts, it fell sometimes to Saracenic, sometimes to Byzantine lords, until in 1191 King Richard Cœur de Lion captured it, and gave it to Lusignan, the conquered King of Jerusalem. Guy de Lusignan founded a dynasty; and a century later, when the remnant of the Hospitallers from Acre set foot upon the island, they were welcomed by King Henry de Lusignan, Crusader by inheritance, a friend and ally of the Military Orders.

Capture of
Cyprus by
Richard Cœur
de Lion, 1191.

He gave a house to the fugitive Hospitallers at the town of Limasol, in one of the most beautiful and fertile parts of his small kingdom.

Soon the Brethren of the Order oversea—in England, France, and Spain, in Scotland, Ireland, Portugal, and Italy—opened their coffers to send treasure and supplies, and, better still, despatched to Cyprus some of their

strongest Knights to enable the gallant Grand Master Villiers to re-establish his Hospital.

The Hospital
for the fourth
time re-established,
1291.

Founded in Jerusalem, refounded at Margat, and then again at Acre, the Hospital of St. John was now for the fourth time re-established.

Sufferings of
Christians
condemned to
slavery by the
Turks.

Although the Holy Land had fallen back under the dominion of the Sultan, pilgrims still made their toilsome and dangerous way to Palestine, facing indescribable fatigues and sufferings, dreading most of all the Barbary Corsairs. To be captured by these merciless pirates meant a life of slavery and bitter degradation in the galleys. Chained to wooden benches, night and day, these captives toiled and laboured at the oars; and if they flagged, they smarted beneath the lash of taskmasters whose cruelty to Christians was proverbial throughout the known world.

A new maritime
power.

But a new maritime power was destined to arise. After the Hospitallers were settled in Cyprus, they went sailing in their galleys to the ports of Italy and the Adriatic; and taking on board all pilgrims seeking passage to the Holy Land, they waited to bring the travellers back to Europe. While carrying to and from the Syrian coast this cargo of devoted souls, the Hospitallers not infrequently were menaced and attacked by Barbary and Levantine pirates. The Turkish and Saracenic seawolves then discovered with dismay that the White Cross Knights could fight as formidably on a galley's deck as from behind the ramparts of a fortress.

Then the Corsairs, for centuries the terror of the Mediterranean, began to find their tyrannous ascendancy persistently disputed.

The capture of Rhodes in the summer of 1310, by Villaret, Grand Master of the Hospitallers—who, like his predecessor Villiers, was Admiral or General as the occasion required—marked the beginning of a new era.

Capture of
Rhodes by the
Hospitallers,
1310.

From the famous harbour (famous even in pre-Saracenic times when Rhodes had been a centre of Hellenic power, art, and culture) the Hospitallers were able to send out a rapidly increasing fleet. The day of reckoning had come; no longer were the slave-markets of Alexandria and Constantinople thronged with captive Christians. No longer did incalculable numbers of Latin, British, and Teutonic prisoners tug at the oars beneath the decks of Turkish ships. The Turks learnt how it felt to labour in the galleys of the Hospitallers. And the tireless energy of the White Cross Knights in the protection of the weak against oppression, cruelty, and outrage, won them the gratitude of every sick and poor or timid pilgrim; while the maritime and military strength which made them able so effectively to help the helpless, caused them also to be respected and feared by the great Powers.

The Barbary
Corsairs no
longer supreme
in the
Mediterranean.

Their influence extended far and wide, and they even made alliances with Eastern potentates such as the Persian Shah, and with the ruler of Armenia.

In 1365 their storming of Alexandria cost

Capture of
Alexandria by
the White Cross
Knights, 1365.

the lives of over a hundred of the bravest Knights. Alexandria had then become a rendezvous for pirates; so its capture, and the destruction of the Turkish shipping in the harbour, was a necessary phase in the arduous task of breaking the sea-power of the Moslem.

Capture of
Tripoli, 1367.

In 1367 the Hospitallers joined forces with the King of Cyprus and the Genoese Republic to recapture Tarsus, Tripoli, Bellinas, and Laodicea.

The Hospital-
lers aid King
Sigismund of
Hungary
against the
Turks.

During the closing decade of the fourteenth century they went to the aid of Sigismund, King of Hungary, whose gallant struggle against the invading tide of Turks and Serbians had roused the sympathy of France, Burgundy, and Venice.

As at Tiberias more than two hundred years before, although the Hospitallers fought with characteristic skill and valour, they fought a losing battle—sacrificed to the obstinacy of the Count de Nevers, who waved aside the sound strategic and tactical counsel of the King of Hungary, just as King Guy of Jerusalem had flouted the solemn warnings of Raymond of Tripoli.

Battle of
Nicopolis;
disaster to the
Christians.
Sultan of Tur-
key massacres
10,000 prisoners.

The consequent overthrow of the allied armies at Nicopolis, and the massacre by the Sultan Bajazet of 10,000 Christian prisoners on the banks of the Danube, was the prelude to a period of increasingly frightful conflict between the forces of the East and West.

A new and still more terrible foe to Christianity arose in the person of Timour, a Tartar

chief.* Destining himself for sovereignty of the entire world, and seeking to gain that mastery by terrorism, cruelty, and arrogance, Timour felt towards the Order of St. John a bitter hatred, not unlike the present hatred of the Pan-German League towards the British Empire. To Timour, the armoured galleys of the Hospitallers, and the maritime supremacy they typified, seemed as obnoxious as the Navy of Great Britain to the modern Huns.

The aspiring Tartar therefore beleaguered Smyrna, one of the White Cross strongholds; and—though the Knights fought resolutely, dauntlessly, superbly—yet the Tartar battering-rams effected breaches in their walls. Then Timour's artillerymen inserted into the gaps large wooden planks saturated with naphtha. These they ignited; and as the flames devoured the wood, great masses of the ramparts came down with a reverberant crash; whereon the Tartars, yelling with savage joy, hurled themselves into the citadel, and hoisted their black flag—the harbinger of death.

Next day, when the fleet from Rhodes appeared in sight, Timour announced his victory by shooting from his siege-machines on to their decks the heads of the Hospitallers, who had chosen rather to die than yield.

Timour's triumph at Smyrna encouraged him to undertake the overthrow of the Knights Hospitaller at Rhodes. But before he

"Tamburlaine the Great," a Tartar chief, destines himself to world-sovereignty.

Siege of Smyrna; gallant defence by the Hospitallers.

Tartar chief wrecks Smyrna.

* Marlowe's "Tamburlaine the Great."

could attempt a landing on their vigilantly guarded shores, news reached him that the Emperor of India, at the head of a large force, had crossed the eastern frontier of his kingdom and was pressing on towards his capital. Timour hastened back to grapple with the imperial invader.

Ignominious end of Timour, the would-be world-conquerer.

Fortunately for European civilization, instead of attaining universal sovereignty the Tartar chief lost all that he had gained; and soon death smote him down.

Sultan ostentatiously signs peace treaties, and goes to war, 1453.

For a while there was peace. But when in 1453 Constantinople was attacked by the Sultan Mahomet II—in cynical violation of the numerous treaties he had signed so ostentatiously—the Hospitallers prepared for rigorous defence. “Constantinople first, then Rhodes,” had been the Sultan’s threat; and on May the 29th Constantinople had fallen.

Capture of Constantinople by the Turks.

Then Sultan Mahomet sent the Knights of the White Cross a summons to be vassals to his throne and pay a yearly tribute.

“God grant,” replied the Grand Master, “that I may not leave as slaves or vassals the Order I found free and glorious. If the Sultan wishes to be lord of Rhodes, he must pass over my dead body.”

The Siege of Rhodes, 1480. Victorious resistance under Grand Master d'Aubusson.

Finding the Hospitallers ready for war, the Sultan chose peace; and twenty-seven years elapsed before the Turks besieged the island.

This happened in 1480, and the victorious defence by the Knights under their heroic Grand Master Peter d'Aubusson was one of the most famous events of the century.

The ultimate victory of the White Cross against enormous odds seemed so miraculous that it was attributed to supernatural aid from John the Baptist, patron of the Order. A vision of the saint clad in goat-skins, and followed by angels bearing flaming swords, was said to have been seen not only by the Christians but by the Turks.

The following year Sultan Mahomet died lamenting he was cut off too soon to avenge his defeat.

Death of
Mahomet II,
1481.

Again there was a lull. But in 1522 the Sultan Solyman, having captured Belgrade, resolved to conquer Rhodes. He went through the conventional preliminary formula of expressing devotion to the cause of peace, and declaring the guilt of the war must be upon the Knights of the White Cross if they did not "instantly surrender the island and fortress."

The Sultan
Solyman ex-
presses devotion
to peace, and
immediately
begins a war of
aggression.

The Grand Master at this period was the celebrated Villiers de L'Isle Adam, one of the ablest and most dauntless of the many noble Frenchmen whose exploits have reflected glory on the Order. For six months the Moslems poured against him their unending series of battalions, led by generals versed in all the arts of war; and from June to December the Grand Master and his Knights beat back the torrent of invasion. But at last the civil population—terrified by Solyman's persistence, and by his threat to cut off all their ears and noses if they did not immediately capitulate—in panic terror besought their

Second Siege of
Rhodes by the
Sultan's enorm-
ous naval and
military forces,
1522.

brave defenders to make terms with the enemy.

The Knights would have fought to the last rather than let their stronghold fall into the hands of the Moslem. But they had reason to believe that if they did not soon surrender, the cowardly inhabitants intended to betray them to the Sultan. The Grand Master decided, therefore, to frustrate this base design and make his own conditions with the besiegers while there was still a hope of favourable terms.

Capitulation of Rhodes after six months' defence.

He offered to give up the town and fortress provided the religion and persons of the citizens should be guaranteed safe from persecution; that the garrison should march out with the honours of war, and the Knights and Brethren should embark in their own galleys, taking such of the inhabitants as chose to accompany them. The terms were gladly accepted by the enemy; and on Christmas Day, as the Turkish chroniclers triumphantly relate, the "Sublime Sultan"—with his white-robed bodyguard, his gold-fringed banners, his favourite regiment of janissaries, and his enormous retinue of warrior-nobles, "glittering with priceless jewels"—made his state-entry into the city,

Arabic description of triumphal entry of the Sultan Solymán into Rhodes, December, 1522.

to the sound of salvoes of artillery and in the midst of a dense crowd.

The rest of the bodyguard, the musicians, and the officers of all the various corps, followed the glorious Padishah, crying, *Allah! Allah! By thy will the scimitar of Mahomed has captured this proud fortress!*

In this manner the Sultan went as far as the Temple of San Givan* and there, where the infidel [Christians] adored an idol, he, the blessed conqueror, addressed a prayer to the true God.†

It was then explained to L'Isle Adam that he was required to pay his respects to Solyman in person before he could depart; and accordingly, on the last day of the year, he presented himself in the camp of the Sultan and requested a farewell audience. The young Ottoman Emperor kept him waiting for many hours on a cold winter's day, in hope of humbling and humiliating him; but when at last the Grand Master was admitted to the imperial presence, his venerable appearance, his noble dignity, and his lofty equanimity, impressed even his arrogant conqueror.

Praising the gallant and prolonged defence, and complimenting the Grand Master upon his generalship, the Sultan proceeded to offer him a high command in the Moslem army if he would accept the Prophet Mahomed in place of Christ.

The Sultan's
offer to the
Grand Master
L'Isle Adam.

L'Isle Adam's reply was brief but characteristic:

"After a life spent—not ingloriously—in combating for my faith, if I could abandon that faith for worldly gain and glory, the Sultan himself would have a right to withdraw the esteem he has just now been pleased to

* Church of St. John the Baptist.

† Arab Chronicle of Ahmet Hafiz. (Quoted by General Porter, "History of the Knights of Malta," 2nd edition, p. 376.)

express. I ask only of his magnanimity that the terms of the capitulation may be maintained inviolate.”*

Departure of the
Hospitallers
from Rhodes,
January 1st,
1523.

Next morning—a wild and stormy New Year’s Day—the Grand Master and the Hospitallers left Rhodes for ever, taking with them in their galleys four thousand of the inhabitants who preferred to abandon home and country rather than trust the mercy of the hereditary foe.†

And thus, after two hundred and twelve years at Rhodes, the Hospitallers of St. John of Jerusalem went forth again into the world—defeated, homeless, sorrowful; but still inspired by that high unconquerable spirit which had over and over again enabled

* High tribute is paid to L’Isle Adam by a modern British General:

The heroism and grandeur of his character were such that the clouds of adversity only set it forth in greater lustre. The gallant defence of Rhodes, although ending in the worst disaster that had occurred since the loss of Jerusalem, has been so imperishably connected with him that he has become more distinguished by his conduct during that calamitous epoch than many a successful leader.

General Porter’s “History of the Knights of Malta,” 2nd edition, p. 398.

† Their decision was wise, for the conditions of the capitulation were broken. The janissaries ill-treated the women, desecrated the churches, looted the shops and houses, and committed all the outrages against which the Grand Master had done his utmost to secure the townsfolk.

When reminded of the promises made to the Christians, the Moslem officers excused themselves by saying they could not control their men. But when the Sultan suddenly announced that he would execute any officer who continued to countenance acts contrary to the terms of the capitulation, the disorder ceased immediately.

the Order to wrest victory from the jaws of defeat.

Something ere the end,
 Some work of noble note, may yet be done.
 And tho'
 We are not now that strength which in old days
 Moved earth and heaven,—that which we are, we
 are ;
*One equal temper of heroic hearts,
 Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
 To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.*



PART IV

IN THE BRITISH ISLES: 1102 (?)–1579

EARLY in the twelfth century—and within a few years after the crucial day when the Crusaders carried Jerusalem by storm, and freed the Rector of the Hospital from grim imprisonment—the Order established itself in England, the Prior selecting for headquarters the village of Clerkenwell, just outside the city of London. There, amidst “fields for pasture” and “delightful meadowlands with flowing streams,” he superintended the building of a Convent, Church, and Hospital of St. John.

The Order of
St. John
established at
Clerkenwell.

Invited to Scotland by David I (Saint David), the Order flourished north of the Tweed in the succeeding reigns, and received further endowments from King William the Lion.

The Hos-
pitallers in
Scotland and
Ireland.

Kilmainham
Priory conferred
upon the
Hospitallers by
“Strongbow,”
Earl of Pem-
broke, 1174.

In Ireland, Richard de Clare, Earl of Pembroke (the famous “Strongbow”), commander of Henry II’s army, conferred upon the Hospitallers (in 1174) the Priory and woodlands of Kilmainham; and thence they gradually extended their domains. In Meath and Louth, in Waterford and Cork, in Sligo, Wexford, Carlow, and Kildare, they held estates, and tended the sick assiduously.

But no Irishman or Scotsman ever attained the supreme dignity of Grand Master of the Order.* Among the sixty-nine Grand Masters (from the founding of the Military Order by Raymond du Puy in 1118 to its melancholy extinction in the last years of the eighteenth century), there were several Italians, Spaniards, Portuguese, and English of Norman extraction. There was one German, Ferdinand von Hompesch—now only remembered for his ignominious surrender of Malta to the forces of Napoleon. The majority of Grand Masters were French, and France should be proud that for nearly six centuries she supplied the most famous Order in Christendom with such a notable succession of saintly warriors and vigorous administrators.

The Knights Hospitaller themselves, however, laid little stress on differences of nationality; their object rather was to blend the spiritual and material strength of all the Western nations to resist the periodic waves of Moslem conquest and aggression.

Mediaeval
Hospitallers
strive to unite
all Christian
nations to stem
the tide of
Mahomedan
invasion.

Yet, while embodying this unity of aim and spirit, the Hospitallers showed wonderful adaptability in the external sphere of their services; and it is this combination of brilliant versatility with heroic constancy which made them so great a moral and practical force wherever they succeeded in penetrating.

In Jerusalem medical and military experts,

* The heads of the European commandaries were styled Grand Prior.

Versatility of
the Knights and
Brethren.

at Acre they had begun to realize the importance of commanding the sea; and so at Rhodes and Malta they were able to translate into accomplished fact the lessons their Order learnt during the time their Hospital had been established in the famous Syrian seaport. In England—where they neither needed to repel Mahomedan invaders, nor to sail the seas in chase of Barbary Corsairs—they adapted themselves to the more peaceful circumstances, and added to their medical and surgical attainments an interest in agriculture and education.

As their vow not to draw sword except against the Moslems debarred them from all active part in wars between the Christian Princes, their history in England becomes less dramatic than when their Hospitals were held at the sword's point against an Oriental enemy.* Unbroken peace, however, was not to be their fate, not even in the then idyllic village of Clerkenwell.

Church and
Priory of St.
John attacked
by the dema-
gogue Wat
Tyler; destruc-
tion of the Library.

In spite of their unfailing charity, their skill and knowledge rendered them objects of suspicion to the envious demagogue Wat Tyler, who, in blind lust for destruction, incited his rabble to attack the Church and Priory of St. John, and to make bonfires of

* Occasionally this rule was broken by individual Knights. Sir Giles de Argentine (whose gallant death at Bannockburn Sir Walter Scott describes in "The Lord of the Isles") was a White Cross Knight (not Red Cross, as Sir Walter makes him); and at the battle of Flodden Field, the Grand Preceptor of Scotland was killed fighting for James IV against England.

the Hospitallers' library. Many valuable works on medicine, law, theology, and history—Arabian and Persian as well as French and Latin—were thus lost to the Order.*

The Hospitallers—though individually renouncing all possessions save their robes and armour and their long cross-handled swords—were, as a community, extremely wealthy. But just as the strength and intellect of the Knights and Brethren were expended “*in the service of mankind*,” so was their rich exchequer. They were regarded as the just and honourable trustees of funds for public use; and were selected to receive and administer the confiscated property of the Templars, when (through the machinations of the King of France) the Order of Knights Templar was abolished.

Hospitallers appointed to administer confiscated property of Knights Templar, 1314.

The Priory was rich in masterpieces of Western and Byzantine art, but these—with the collection of sumptuous illuminated books and precious documents—were sacrificed to the irrational fury of the mob. Sacrificed also was the Grand Prior, Sir Robert Hales, whom they slaughtered wantonly; and, having beheaded him on Tower Hill, they proceeded to burn and almost entirely destroy the beautiful and stately Priory, which for over two hundred and fifty years had been a centre of charitable exertions and civilizing influences *pro utilitate hominum*.

Murder of the Grand Prior, and burning of Clerkenwell Priory by Wat Tyler's mob, 1381.

This disaster took place long after the

* “I cannot read, therefore I wish all books were burnt,” says Envy in Marlowe's “Doctor Faustus.”

Expedition of
English
Hospitallers to
Palestine, 1237.

departure for Palestine of the most vigorous Knights of the Order. In 1237 a chosen band, headed by their Prior Theodoric, had

set out from their house at Clerkenwell . . . with thirty shields uncovered, with spears raised, and preceded by their banner. . . . They passed through the city that they might obtain the blessings of the spectators; and bowing their heads, with their cowls lowered, they commended themselves to the good prayers of all the people.

So devastating were the ravages of constant war against the hardy Moslems that many more detachments from the European commanderies were needed to reinforce the parent Order. After the capture of Rhodes by the Knights Hospitallers, the branch establishments despatched oversea their ablest fighting men to aid in grappling with the dreaded Ottoman Corsairs. But when in 1381 the mob came roaring to the Priory gates of Clerkenwell, how poignantly the Serving Brethren and the defenceless Chaplains must have regretted the absence of the strongest of their military champions.

Patiently and laboriously the Priory was reconstructed; and in 1399—eighteen years after this cruel and inexcusable attack of the ungrateful populace upon their benefactors—the Hospitallers were able to entertain for a fortnight Henry, Duke of Lancaster, soon afterwards to be King Henry IV. At the former Priory, Henry II, Edward I of Crusading fame, Eleanor, his beautiful and heroic wife, John, the treacherous brother of King Richard Cœur de Lion, Alexander,

Many Royal
guests at
Clerkenwell
Priory.

Prince of Scotland, and many other royal and noble personages had been received as guests by the Knights Hospitaller; and the theme of their talk had been "the tragical afflictions of the Eastern world," which stirred "the tears and deep compassion" of the Brethren.

In 1411 King Henry V made a long sojourn at the Priory. He hoped to take the Cross in strenuous effort for the freeing of the Holy Sepulchre; but was fated to die in France before he could accomplish this, his most cherished project.

In 1485 Richard III, the last Plantagenet King, held a royal council in the Great Hall of the Order of St. John, and denied a slanderous rumour which had accused him of intending to take as wife his niece the Princess Elizabeth of York—who afterwards became the queen of Henry VII, the first Tudor monarch, enemy and conqueror of Richard.

In the reign of the second Tudor—Henry VIII of unholy memory—came the suppression of the Religious Orders and the confiscation of their property.

Suppression of
the Religious
Orders by
Henry VIII.

The Hospitallers in this time of persecution behaved with characteristic dignity:

The suppression of the Hospitallers deserveth especial notice, because the manner thereof was different from the dissolution of other religious houses. . . . The Knights, being gentlemen and soldiers of ancient families and high spirits, would not be brought to present to Henry VIII such puling petitions . . . as other Orders had done.*

Dignified conduct of the
Hospitallers.

* Fuller's "Holy War," quoted in General Porter's "History of the Knights of Malta," 2nd edition, p. 574.

Rather than indulge in base ignoble flattery, or deviate from any of their principles, the English Knights, of their own accord, resigned their Priory and Hospital into the hands of the rapacious Tudor.

Then the greater number of the military members of the Order escorted their lay and clerical Brethren to Malta. Of the few Knights who could not endure to exile themselves from England, Sir Adrian Fortescue and three others were executed for refusing to accept King Henry VIII as head of the Church.

Execution of
Sir Adrian
Fortescue and
three other
White Cross
Knights, as
martyrs to their
faith.

In 1548—by command nominally of the boy-King Edward VI, but actually of the Lord Protector Somerset—the Church of St. John was blown up with gunpowder, so that some of its materials could be used in building Somerset House. Only the Gothic crypt and the wrecked chancel still survived to indicate how beautiful the edifice had been.

Destruction of
the Church of
St. John, 1548.

But even after this calamity there was still to come one gleam of returning prosperity.

Queen Mary Tudor decreed the renewal of all the ancient privileges and prerogatives of the "Prior and Co-brethren of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem in England," and enabled them to begin rebuilding their beloved church.

Brief revival
and final
extinction of the
Military Order
of St. John in
England, 1579.

But after Mary's brief and ill-starred reign, her successor, Queen Elizabeth, at once reversed her legislation, and dealt a crushing blow. Not merely did she annex the property of the Hospitallers, but—worse still

—she conferred the Priory upon her Master of the Revels, who did not even appreciate the gift. He complained that his troupe of actors found their clothes grow “musty, moth-eaten and rotten,” by reason of “the dankness of the house, and want of convenient presses and other places requisite.”

Heavy and sorrowful must have been the hearts of the last remnant of the once-powerful and famous Hospitallers of St. John, to see their church again desecrated, their Order—after six centuries of devoted work in England—scorned and banished, and their Great Hall, hitherto the scene of many royal conferences and noble gatherings, now a theatre for “Stage Plays and Comic Shows.”



PART V

IN MALTA: 1530-1798

“**H**E has learnt much who is well acquainted with suffering”; and during the years of homeless wandering which followed immediately upon the loss of Rhodes, the faith and patience of the Hospitallers were severely tested. The Grand Master Villiers de L’Isle Adam was like a King without a Kingdom. But on March the 24th of 1530, the Emperor Charles V conferred on the Order of St. John the perpetual sovereignty of the islands of Malta and Gozo and the city of Tripoli, with all the castles and fortresses thereto belonging.

Malta in 1530.

This imperial gift calls up a vision of the picturesque and stately Malta of to-day, of Valetta with its famous harbours, its massive fortifications, its superbly beautiful churches, and its Governor’s Palace—rich in tapestry and armour and the charm of dignified antiquity. But Malta, when granted to the Hospitallers, was a barren rock: its fortifications a few feeble ramparts and shallow ditches, its “castle” the inadequate Tower of St. Angelo (containing only, at the most, three pieces of artillery, and those three obsolete). The capital, inhabited by a popula-

tion more Arabic than European in appearance, was a mere huddled mass of houses clustered upon a hill surrounded by a crumbling wall; and the Hospitallers, on taking possession of this desolate town and arid island, must have mourned anew the loss of Rhodes.

Malta, however, was not without its noble families and its traditions of bygone wealth and greatness.

The *Melita* of the Greeks, the *Ogygia* of the still earlier Phoenicians, it reached the height of its prosperity as a Roman colony some six or seven hundred years before the Christian era. But when the Roman legions sank into luxury and ease, the terrible barbarian Vandals swept across the island like a destroying hurricane. They in their turn were dominated by the yet fiercer Goths; till the Goths were also fated to exemplify the parable of the strong man armed, who only keeps his house until there comes one stronger than he.

In the time of Gothic decadence the Saracens became the masters of the island; till at last they too were overcome by skill and vigour greater than their own. Their conqueror was Count Roger of Sicily, whose kinsfolk had fought at Hastings and had seen the Norman Duke crowned King of England.

During the four and a half ensuing centuries, the Maltese—a race of mingled Saracenic and Sicilian blood—had gradually deteriorated and dwindled, until in 1530 the entire population of the island numbered no more than seventeen thousand. But they

Città Notabile,
the old capital
of Malta.

Fame of Malta
under Roman
rule, 600 B.C.

responded gratefully to the inspiring influence and reconstructive rule of Villiers de L'Isle Adam; and in the next generation, under the leadership of the still greater Jean de la Valette—most famous of all the White Cross Knights—they rose to a height of moral and material prosperity which far exceeded even the traditional glories of their Greek and Roman past.

Character of
Jean de la
Valette, greatest
of all the Grand
Masters.
Analogy to
Modern British
Generals.

The character of La Valette, a Frenchman by birth, displays in a supreme degree the very qualities which we are apt to claim as typically British. Sometimes his laconic speech and steady resolution suggest analogy to the Iron Duke of Wellington; sometimes (especially in acute and penetrating comprehension of the soul and strategy of Eastern adversaries) he seems a prototype of Lord Kitchener; and in his power of drawing forth the real affection and entire confidence of the rank and file, he reminds us of Sir Redvers Buller, whose men, during the time of the worst reverses in South Africa, would come back singing into camp, content and even joyous in the conviction that though beaten to-day they would be led to victory by Buller to-morrow.

Born during the last decade of the fifteenth century, La Valette was only twenty when he joined the Order, and twenty-eight when he took part in the defence of Rhodes against the Sultan Solyman. From Malta he soon became conspicuous in dashing expeditions against the Turkish pirates; and whether by

sea or land he showed a tireless capacity for work, and steady zeal for the honour and service of the Order. Fervently though unostentatiously devout, in the intervals of his naval and military exploits he would lay aside his armour, resume the gown of black with the White Cross, and in the hospital or convent toil at humble tasks.

His physical strength was as remarkable as his moral austerity ; and not even a terrible experience of capture and slavery in the hands of the pitiless Corsairs could break his constitution, any more than it could tame his spirit.*

Elected Grand Master at the age of sixty-three—after thirty-five years of almost incessant strain and hardship—it might have appeared as if his career must soon draw to a close ; but the best was still to come, and the whole of his past life of strenuous achievement and ardent devotion was but the prologue to that great defence of Malta which has immortalized his name.

At this juncture the Order received a heavy blow in the loss of Tripoli. Taken by storm during the first Crusade in the eleventh century, lost after the wane of Christian military power in Palestine, but regained in 1367 with the aid of the Knights Hospitaller, and entrusted to the Order permanently by the Emperor Charles V in 1530, its recapture by

Recapture of
Tripoli by the
Moslems.

* He was ransomed by his Brethren ; and many years later he in his turn captured Abda Racman, the Turk who had imprisoned and ill-treated him.

the Sultan's forces sent a shiver of alarm through Mediterranean Christendom, and presaged a life-and-death struggle between the Crescent and the Cross.

Solyman the Magnificent, the conqueror of Rhodes, the terror of Europe.

The Ottoman Empire was still under the rule of the same Sultan Solyman who had driven the Hospitallers out of Rhodes. His reign during the intervening three-and-forty years had been one long triumphal pageant. Age had abated nothing of his thirst for conquests, and the vast armaments he kept in perpetual readiness for action were the terror of Europe.

"The fool fears not until the ill befalls"; but La Valette, bred to danger from his boyhood, was as far-seeing as courageous. He had long anticipated a supreme struggle with Solyman the Magnificent; so when in 1565, by means of the spies he kept at Constantinople, he learnt that Malta was to be the Sultan's next objective, he was neither surprised nor confounded.

Secretly and swiftly he sent his messengers abroad to every branch of the Order of St. John, summoning to his aid the best and bravest Knights—and from Italy and France, from Aragon, Castile, and Austria, there hastened in response the flower of White Cross chivalry.*

Assembling the Knights around him, and adjuring them to stand firm in the noble cause

* The English branch had been suppressed fourteen years previously.

for which it was their privilege to live and die, he led them to the Convent chapel, where they all received the Blessed Sacrament together and sought spiritual fortification for the coming struggle—a struggle so stupendous that even after La Valette's lifetime of preparation it might well have appalled any but the stoutest heart and most aspiring soul.

The behaviour of the Maltese population was admirable; they had perfect confidence in La Valette. There was no panic; even the women came forward to aid in the general preparations; and La Valette set the example of working with his own hands at strengthening the massive ramparts which he and his predecessors had been building in readiness for this crucial contest.

When Villiers de L'Isle Adam had persuaded the Emperor Charles V. to bestow the sovereignty of Malta upon the Order, this Grand Master had been largely determined in his choice by the configuration of the east and north side of the island, which possessed two natural harbours, subsequently fortified by the Knights of St. John and called by them respectively the Great Harbour and Marsa Muscetto. In order to understand the Turkish siege it is necessary to bear in mind that these two harbours are separated by the isthmus of Mount Sceberras, and that the fort of St. Elmo guarded the entrance to Marsa Muscetto. The Great Harbour, surrounded by hills, is enlarged by an inland bay which separated the suburb of Seneglea from the capital town

Admirable
courage of the
Maltese.

of the Bourg ; and at the extremity of the Bourg, and facing Mount Sceberras, the Castle of St. Angelo pointed its guns across the Great Harbour. St. Angelo, which in 1530 had been an interesting relic of antiquity rather than a useful fort, had before 1565 been almost completely rebuilt by the Knights of St. John, and was the citadel whence La Valette directed the famous operations against the forces of the Sultan Solymán.

On May the 18th, early in the morning, a signal gun from St. Angelo summoned the countryfolk to throng into the well-walled Bourg. The hour had come ; the Turkish ships were sighted on the horizon.

The Sultan was not taking command in person ; but he had sent the greater portion of his fleet and a large army. All were confident of victory.

There were a hundred and thirty armoured galleys, attended by a variety of smaller craft ; and the troops consisted of thirty thousand men, of whom one thousand four hundred were the terrible janissaries.

The Christians
with an army of
9,000 prepare to
face the Turkish
Army of 30,000.

To beat back these thirty thousand seasoned troops, the Christians—including hired Spanish soldiers, local militia, and sailors from the galleys—had less than nine thousand in all. Moreover, the Order of St. John was shadowed by the memory of the last siege of Rhodes in 1522—frustration after six months' titanic conflict. But "where the coward would despair, the brave man takes heart of grace" ; and La Valette impressed not only

upon his Order but upon the civil population his conviction that the forthcoming contest was destined to decide whether Islam or Christianity would rule Europe. The Christians, he believed, would prevail, no matter how heavy the odds—unless dissension, treachery, or cowardice crept in amongst them and thus unfitted them to be champions of Christ.

As the Turks were landing their troops in St. Thomas's Bay, a party of Knights were sent out to watch their proceedings and cut off any stragglers. One of these, La Rivière, was himself intercepted and taken before the Turkish General, Mustapha Pasha, who questioned him as to the state of the defences.

La Rivière, as became a gallant Frenchman, was gay and debonair. The garrison, he said, was in good heart, the city was provisioned against an interminable siege and resolved to hold out to the last man ; but this resolution was not likely to be heavily tested, as the Order of St. John had a promise of co-operation from the Austro-Spanish imperial fleet.

Considerably irritated by this tone of patronage, Mustapha Pasha accused his prisoner of mendacity, and put him to the torture to extract the truth as to the weak point of the fortifications.

This White Cross Knight, with his *à la* and airy urbanity, was something of a diplomat; and while in the hands of his tormentors it

Strategy of La
Rivière when
tortured by
Turkish
General.

occurred to him that, if he feigned to break down and confess, he might mislead the Turk. To give way too soon would have been inconsistent with the reputation of his Order, so he showed considerable power of endurance before he opened his lips. Then he gasped out that the Pasha would find the defences feeblest at the Point of Castile. Gratified at having made the stubborn Christian speak, Mustapha immediately called up his janisaries. But on marching them to the north-east as indicated, it immediately became obvious that the Point of Castile was the strongest part of the fortifications. He avenged himself by slaying the Knight who had presumed to make him waste his time.

There was then a consultation between Mustapha and the Admiral Piali. They differed in opinion as to what should next be done. The Admiral strongly advised awaiting the arrival of Dragut, the famous Corsair, whose expert knowledge would be invaluable. But the General, objecting to delay, began immediately to beleaguer Fort St. Elmo, which blocked the entrance to the stately harbour of Marsa Muscetto where he aimed at anchoring the Turkish fleet.

His siege-guns being enormously powerful, and the Turks excellent artillerymen, the fort suffered severely, and its commander (a Spanish Knight, La Cerda) in open council demanded reinforcements, and declared he could not otherwise hold out for many days. La Valette sent him fifty Knights and two

Differences of
opinion between
Turkish
military and
naval
commanders.

Bombardment
of St. Elmo.

hundred Spanish soldiers, with a stern command to do his duty and to cope with difficulties instead of complaining of them.

At this juncture Dragut, the Algerine corsair, arrived to reinforce his countrymen with thirteen galleys and 1,500 men. He condemned Mustapha's choice of St. Elmo as the first point of attack ; operations, he said, should have been concentrated on the strongest part of the enemy's defence, not on St. Elmo, which, even when captured, would not give command of the island. But as the blunder had been committed, and it would look undignified to retreat, he proposed to abide by the mistake and push on the siege as vigorously as possible. He then made a feint of retiring, in order the more effectually to startle the enemy by a sudden attack. Taken by surprise, the fort would have fallen but for the gallant exploit of a young Spanish officer who, at the entrance to the drawbridge, withstood the onrush of the janissaries almost single-handed, until the garrison had time to come to his assistance.

Dragut, the
Corsair.

Gallant exploit
of a Spanish
Knight.

The struggle was terrific, and from St. Angelo, La Valette's citadel, little could be distinguished by the watchers, for St. Elmo was enveloped in dense clouds of smoke. The guns thundered incessantly until sunset, when the Turkish standard was seen flying from the ravelin ; but the White Cross still waved proudly over the fort, and the Turks retreated to their trenches after losing 2,000 of their best men. The Christian loss was only one hundred,

Turks lose 2,000
men in the
assault on
St. Elmo.

but twenty of these were Knights who could ill be spared, and Mustapha's artillery had done tremendous execution. La Valette sent immediate reinforcements, but found that the whole garrison, even the Knights, were all for abandoning the fort. Though not afraid to die, they were not eager to be sacrificed merely to prolong for a few days a resistance they considered futile.

La Valette, however, had his reasons for insisting on the holding of St. Elmo. Not only was it gratifying to see the enemy losing thousands of men in an attack on the least important of the forts, but it happened that the Spanish Admiral had declared he would only hazard the Emperor's fleet against the Turk provided the Christian flag could be kept flying on St. Elmo. The Grand Master therefore informed the weary garrison that if they did not appreciate their honourable task, they could withdraw, and he would replace them by other troops; but that hold the fort he must and would.

As La Valette had foreseen, they then begged to be allowed to maintain their post to the end.

Continued
bombardment
of St. Elmo.

The Turks meantime were keeping up such a continuous fire of heavy guns that they gave the besieged no breathing space in which to repair the numerous breaches in their walls. For many days and nights the contest raged incessantly. Storming party after storming party was beaten back by the White Cross Knights, who were burning with zeal to prove

that their previous hesitation had not been caused by lack of faith and fervour.

From the Castle of St. Angelo, La Valette directed his artillery to rake the flank and rear of the Turkish army as it advanced to the attack; and shouts of encouragement and admiration from St. Angelo reached the gallant defenders of St. Elmo.

On one occasion they stood for six hours on their broken battlements and kept beating back battalion after battalion of Mustapha's janissaries, who hurled themselves again and again upon the stubborn Christians, and again and again were forced to retreat.

Gallant defence
of St. Elmo.

The losses to the garrison were very heavy; but once more La Valette poured in his reinforcements by night.

Dragut, the Corsair, then pointed out to Mustapha that as long as the Grand Master was able to send reinforcements after each assault, the garrison of St. Elmo would continue to hold out indefinitely. To prevent this, he constructed trenches in front of St. Elmo and on Mount Sceberras pointing across towards St. Angelo, and occupied the surrounding heights with his batteries in such a way that by the 19th of June the investment was complete.*

Successful
engineering of
Dragut, the
pirate.

It had been carried out under a heavy fire from St. Elmo; and Dragut—that ablest of

* The Corsair's name is still commemorated in Point Dragut, the spot on which he constructed his principal battery.

Heroic struggle
against
enormous odds.

Turkish military engineers—was severely wounded ; but he continued to direct the operations, and for the next three days his guns kept up their incessant fire, answered by the guns of St. Elmo. Had not the lower portion of the castle been composed of solid rock, the garrison, even with all their courage and determination, could not have held out so long. At dawn on June the 22nd, after nearly four weeks of unsuccessful efforts, the Turks made another attempt to carry the fort by assault. Three times in succession they were beaten back, and when the sun sank in the west the tattered White Cross banner still showed proudly against the summer sky.

That night a strong swimmer contrived to get across the Great Harbour to La Valette with a final appeal for help.

The Spanish fleet was not in sight, and La Valette judged it useless to hold St. Elmo any longer. He gave orders to withdraw the remnant of the garrison, and sent five large boats with a relieving force. These were to bring the few survivors to a rocky islet in the harbour, whence by a secret and subterranean passage they could make their escape and reach the shelter of St. Angelo.

But the vigilant Turks, suspecting what was afoot, opened so raking a fire from Dragut's batteries that it was impossible to cross the water.

The garrison, then realizing that the end was fast approaching, assembled silently in their little chapel.

Wounded, exhausted, and worn with many weeks of sleepless strife, they confessed their sins for the last time, received the Blessed Sacrament, and commended their souls to God.

Then, before daybreak, they prepared to meet the final assault.

Those who were too grievously wounded to walk or stand were carried in chairs to the broken ramparts, and there—cross-handled swords by their sides—they waited till the dawn began to glimmer and the Turkish battle-cry was heard again.

For four hours the conflict raged, and still the fort held out.

Amazing at it seems, the Turkish losses were so heavy that Mustapha Pasha once more suspended the attack.

The Knights took advantage of the lull to bind up each other's wounds. Only sixty men were still alive, and of those but few unwounded.

Again Mustapha's trumpets sounded to the assault; and it was on June 23rd—the eve of the festival of St. John—that the White Cross standard, which had defied the Turk so long, at last was torn down. By this time all the defenders were dead or mortally wounded and their bodies at the mercy of a ferocious enemy.

In the moment of victory—exasperated by the prolonged resistance—the natural ferocity of Mustapha's temper asserted itself. He ordered that the corpses of the Knights should be taken out from amongst the heap

The last gallant fight of the defenders of St. Elmo.

Turks carry St. Elmo by storm after four weeks' siege, June 23, 1565.

Ferocious vengeance of Mustapha Pasha.

Emblem of the
Cross gashed by
Mustapha
Pasha on the
breasts of the
dead Knights.

of humbler dead, their heads struck off and put on poles, and their faces turned towards the still uninjured Castle of St. Angelo. Their bodies were then fastened on planks nailed in the form of a cross, and Mustapha with his scimitar gashed the same hated emblem on each of their breasts.

Garrison of
St. Elmo had
slain 8,000
Turks out of
30,000.

But these gallant Knights had not died in vain. While during upwards of a month they had held the Turks at bay, they had slain 8,000 out of the Sultan's 30,000 men; and had shown by their invincible spirit the determined resistance still to be expected from their brethren. Mustapha, standing among the ruins of St. Elmo, looked across the Great Harbour to the main fortress of St. Angelo, and exclaimed: "Allah! Allah! what will the parent cost us when the child has been bought at such a price?"

Death of
Dragut the
Corsair.

After the taking of St. Elmo, the Corsair Dragut, whose guns had contributed so largely to the victory, died of his wound. He was a great loss to the Turks, for the surviving General and Admiral were inferior to him in ability, intensely jealous of each other, and beginning to be discouraged.

While Dragut lay dying in the Ottoman camp, the crucified dead bodies of the Knights which had been thrown out into the harbour, floated on the surface of the water, and by sunrise of next morning they had drifted to St. Angelo.

The Christians, in an agony of grief and rage, asked each other if St. John had

forsaken them. Then La Valette assembled the garrison, townsfolk and all, and bade them strive to emulate the heroism of the dead rather than indulge in lamentation. What, he asked, could be more fitting than for Knights of St. John to lay down their lives for their faith on the eve of their patron Saint?

“ They have died a martyr’s death ; they will reap a martyr’s reward. Do not be dismayed that the Turk has at length succeeded in planting his standard on the ruined battlements of St. Elmo. Has he not learnt a lesson which must strike dismay through his whole army ? If that weak and insignificant fort could withstand his most powerful army for more than a month, how with reduced numbers can he hope to succeed against far stronger works and a much larger garrison ? With us must be the victory. Let us on this holy day renew before the altar of God those vows of constancy which our martyred brethren have so nobly fulfilled.”

Meantime, the Turks were celebrating their success. The harbour of Marsa Muscetto was now open to their fleet, and their galleys came streaming in, with banners flying, and martial music resounding triumphantly. Mustapha Pasha despatched the guns of St. Elmo to Constantinople in proof of his conquest ; and to the Grand Master he sent a Greek slave with a flag of truce and an offer of security of life and property for all the garrison and inhabitants if they would immediately surrender.

La Valette exhorts the living to emulate the heroism of the dead.

Mustapha Pasha summons the Grand Master to capitulate.

Spirited reply of
the Grand
Master.

Pointing to the ditches surrounding St. Angelo, La Valette replied, "*There* is the only ground in the island I intend to surrender; and that as a grave for the Turkish army."

Thus defied, Mustapha Pasha pushed on the work as vigorously as possible, and one morning the Maltese woke to find their Great Harbour floating with the enemy's galleys. Mustapha had compelled his Christian slaves to carry a number of galleys overland across the isthmus of Mount Sceberras, as he could capture this harbour no other way.

Turks
reinforced by
the Viceroy of
Algiers.

After a few days the Turks received a reinforcement of 2,500 Corsairs, under Hassan, Viceroy of Algiers, a son-in-law of Dragut, and almost equally celebrated as a successful pirate and a dashing leader.

Hassan, disdainful that so little had been achieved—relative to the enormous losses—offered to lead the assault next day upon the land side of the Bourg, while one of his officers led the attack upon the spur by water.

On the early morning of July the 15th—a day of glittering sunshine—the action opened with the advance of the Turkish flotilla:

It was a beautiful sight, and, but for the fearful stake at issue, would have struck with admiration the gazers who crowded the bastions around. The war, however, had been carried on with so much ferocity . . . that the only feeling aroused by the display was one of rancorous hatred. Men called to mind the barbarous outrages which had been perpetrated on their brethren at St. Elmo, and each one, as he gazed on the proudly advancing foe, registered a vow that he would avenge that fatal day. In advance of the squadron came a boat containing two Turkish priests, who recited

from the Koran such texts as were most likely to arouse the enthusiasm of their followers. When they neared the scene of strife, these holy men cared no longer to occupy their conspicuous position, but . . . returned to camp and watched the conflict from a safe distance.*

The ensuing combat was one of the hottest which had yet taken place, and the two Turkish Corsair leaders showed extraordinary vigour, bravery, and perseverance. The fighting lasted till sundown. At the end of the day the Algerine Corsairs had lost nearly three thousand men, while the Christian losses were under three hundred. Sorrowfully Hassan had to admit that this enemy was unlike any other he had encountered in his hitherto always-victorious career.

Unsuccessful
attack by
Hassan,
Viceroy of
Algiers.

From this time onwards, the Turkish General

resolved to carry out his point rather by the harassing frequency of his attacks than by their intensity. Each day, therefore, witnessed a repetition of the struggle at one or both points of attack. . . . At the appointed signal the besiegers would rush forward with shouts and yells, and would make a dash at the gaping breach, the shrill notes of the atabal ringing forth with inspiring tones. . . . Then would ensue that hand-to-hand encounter, in which the chivalry of St. John, standing on the summit of the breach, invariably proved superior to the assailants struggling up the rugged pathway. Less and less obstinately would the combat be maintained, until the signal of retreat, rising above the din of battle, announced one more failure to the Turk, and one more triumph to the Christian.†

* Major-General Porter's "History of the Knights of Malta," 2nd edition, pp. 457-468.

† *Ibid.*, p. 464.

And so July waned into August, and still the contest raged. La Valette, knowing the position to be growing daily more desperate, had sent his Ambassador to the Spanish Viceroy of Sicily, protesting against the delay of the promised reinforcements. The Viceroy's Council actually proposed to leave Malta to its fate; but fortunately this dishonourable and cynically selfish advice was scorned, and a message was sent to La Valette that if he could hold out till the 31st of the month he could then rely upon receiving relief.

Exploit of
Turkish
Admiral.

While the General Mustapha and the Corsair Hassan had been conducting the daily onslaught, the Admiral, Piali, had succeeded in laying a mine under the bastion; and on August 18th the garrison was startled and horrified by a terrible explosion. Having regarded it as impossible for the enemy to mine the solid rock, the nature of the attack took them completely by surprise. Before the smoke had cleared away, the Turks were in possession of the Bourg. The alarm pealed out from the great bell of the convent church, and a priest rushed to La Valette and begged him to retreat into the fort of St. Angelo, as the Bourg was hopelessly lost.

La Valette
turns defeat
to victory.

Picking up a pike and hastening to the scene of action, the Grand Master rallied the amazed and weary garrison. Inch by inch the Turks were driven back. La Valette was wounded, but to put an end to any fear of further panic, despite his wound, he took up his quarters close by the exposed bastion.

The Knights besought him to go back into the Castle, but he was adamant in his refusal; and the same night the Turks attacked again, —again to be repulsed.

The 19th, 20th, and 21st of August each saw another such assault, and still the Turk was held at bay; but after each terrible struggle the number of the Knights was further reduced, and at last hardly one amongst them remained unwounded. La Valette's nephew was killed in a daring sortie, and it was with great difficulty that the Brethren secured his dead body and saved it from mutilation. La Valette was devotedly attached to this young man, but he sternly checked any attempt at special condolence. All the members of the Order (he said) were equally dear to him, and his nephew no more to be regretted than any of the others.

While the besieged were reduced to a state which taxed human endurance to the utmost, the besiegers were becoming more and more discouraged; and a frightful pestilence had broken out amongst them. But Mustapha, spurred by a fear that the Sultan Solyman would execute him if he returned vanquished to Constantinople, laboured to put heart into his men, and decided to make a surprise assault upon all points simultaneously.

But some unknown friend of the besieged shot into the town an arrow with a piece of paper on which was the one word *Thursday*. Thursday would be August 23rd, and accord-

ingly on that morning the garrison was well prepared.

Every member of the Order of St. John whose wounds did not actually prostrate him, left the Hospital and came out on to the shattered ramparts.

Triumph of
spirit over
matter.

From a material standpoint, it would seem impossible for these weary and wounded men to repel a general assault; but war is primarily a matter of spirit and leadership, and La Valette's unconquerable determination stimulated and upheld each individual combatant. Again the enemy was beaten back, and even the janissaries began to murmur that it evidently was not the will of Allah that the Crescent should prevail in Malta.

The last day of August waned into night, but the promised Spanish reinforcements were delayed. They had started from Syracuse, only to be scattered by a sudden storm which drove them back into the port to refit. The first of September dawned; the second, third, fourth, and fifth—and still no Spanish fleet.

Delay of
reinforcements;
impending
defeat of
Christian
garrison.

The garrison was almost in despair; there seemed nothing now that could be done, except to die like their brethren at St. Elmo. The 6th of September came. In vain the weary and anxious watchers scanned the horizon and looked eagerly towards Syracuse.

There were no Spanish ships in sight; and it was evident that Mustapha Pasha was making extensive preparations to give the *coup de grace*. In another twenty-four hours the banner of Islam would wave from St.

Angelo, the church and convent would be desecrated, and not a single Christian would be left living in Malta!

The long hot day dragged on ; the sun set, and night spread its wing over the stricken island. La Valette, wounded, defeated, face to face with despair, still preserved his almost superhuman equanimity. They were in the hands of God, he said, and they had fought to the utmost of mortal strength ; whether they lived or died mattered little ; their spirit was unconquered.

Almost super-human courage of La Valette.

On September 7th, the sun rose brilliantly, and a light breeze fluttered innumerable pennons.

Another Turkish flotilla?

No. At last the Spanish reinforcements! Malta was saved.

Twelve thousand Spaniards had landed before Mustapha even realized that the Christian reinforcements had arrived. He then made a last effort ; but panic had seized his army, and in vain he strove to rally his demoralized soldiers. With his own hand he shot down man after man who turned to run away. Twice he was unhorsed, and twice he mounted again. But the rout was general and no longer to be checked.

Rout of the Turks, September 7th, 1565.

The siege was now over ; the shattered remnants of that powerful army which, a few short months before, had landed with all the pomp and circumstance of war, must wend their way back to Constantinople, there to meet the angry

frowns of a sovereign who, till that moment, had scarcely known defeat.

It only now remained that the victors should advance upon the town and greet their friends in the Bourg. A joyful meeting it was between those enfeebled, care-worn soldiers and the gallant comrades who had so opportunely come to their rescue. Their worn and haggard faces lighted up with the proud consciousness of the glorious victory they had gained. Alone and unaided, they had for months withstood the shock of one of the most powerful armaments that had ever left the port of Constantinople. . . . Well might La Valette be excused the natural exultation of the moment when he directed that the name of his town should be changed from its old appellation of the Bourg, to the proud and well-earned title of the Città Vittoriosa.*

A glorious
victory.

Applause poured in upon the Order from all over Europe, and King Philip of Spain sent an envoy to congratulate the Grand Master and present him with a golden-hilted sword. Rome was illuminated in honour of the victory, and the Pope wrote offering La Valette a Cardinal's hat. La Valette characteristically declined this favour, which he declared to be incompatible with his naval and military duties.

La Valette
declines a
Cardinal's hat.

Even in the first flush of an unparalleled triumph, La Valette never for a moment relaxed his vigilance. Divining that Solymán "the Invincible" was too strong a monarch and too spirited a warrior to sit inactive under

* General Porter's "History of the Knights of Malta," 2nd edition, p. 474.

The General's entire account of the siege should be carefully read. In the foregoing pages it has only been possible to give the merest outline; but the details are of enthralling interest.

so humiliating a defeat, the Grand Master sent more spies to Constantinople, and was in no way astonished when they returned with news that gangs of slaves already were toiling day and night in the arsenals, and that the Sublime Sultan had sworn no longer to leave his expeditions to the leadership of Admirals and Generals who quarrelled among themselves; next time he would command in person, and not one stone of Malta should be left standing upon another!

Terrible threat
of Solyman the
Magnificent.

La Valette—having his forebodings thus confirmed—called a council of war to discuss what steps must next be taken. The fortifications were in a ruinous state after the siege, the exchequer was empty, and (with the exception of La Valette himself) the strongest and most ardent fighting men of the fraternity were dead or temporarily incapacitated by wounds and exhaustion. The council in consequence advised evacuating the island and retreating to Sicily.

Then La Valette spoke:

Had those Knights who in fulfilment of their vow poured out their blood like water, turned defeat to victory, and died fighting to the last—had they, by God's grace, gained so great a triumph only that the survivors might tamely throw away its fruits? What though the Sultan had threatened to level the city to the ground! For his own part (said the Grand Master) rather would he be buried alive beneath the ruins than let the Turk think the day had come when a Knight of the Order

La Valette's
unconquerable
spirit.

of St. John could hesitate to die in honour of his faith.

The temper of the council changed in a moment; and it was unanimously agreed to hold the island no matter what the odds.

But though La Valette for moral reasons had thus insisted upon infusing into his subordinates something of his own dauntless spirit, being as eminently practical as loftily courageous he was well aware that the garrison was not then in a condition to meet force with force. Therefore—since the Sultan had declared so openly the aggressive purpose of the work which was being pushed ahead in all the dockyards and arsenals of Constantinople—La Valette thought himself justified in sending a trusty detachment of his spies to blow up the arsenals and wreck the fleet with gunpowder before it could leave the Bosphorus.

La Valette's
method of
frustrating the
Sultan's plans.

La Valette able
to build his new
city in peace,
1566.

This surprise completely upset the Sultan's plan of campaign, and he turned his attention to the invasion of Hungary instead. There he was killed, in the autumn of 1566; and Grand Master La Valette was able, not only to rebuild in peace his shattered fortifications, but also to plan and carry out the new capital city which now bears his name. The Pope, the King of France, the Kings of Spain and Portugal aided him with handsome monetary contributions, and on March the 28th, 1566, amidst the acclamations of the multitude, he laid the foundation stone, with its inscription stating how in memory of the siege and in

defence against future aggression the new city had been founded.

To the menace of an external enemy the Grand Master had opposed unbroken resolution, tireless energy, and Spartan equanimity; but on discovering in his Knights of Christ—and striving in vain to extirpate—the taint of degeneracy and arrogance which followed close on the heels of victory, he sunk into a state of deep depression.

Sorrowful last
years of Grand
Master
La Valette.

Austere and reticent, scornful of moral weakness in any member of his Order, though compassionate and tender to the patients at his Hospital—La Valette during the last years of his life seems to have been better loved by the sick poor and by the civil population than by the Knights of the Cross, in whom he now inspired respect and admiration rather than affection. To the younger Knights—especially some who had been attracted to the Order subsequent to his great defence of Malta—he seemed so loftily aloof, so invulnerable, so immovable, that they resented even while they submitted to his just and logical severity. Greatest of all the Grand Masters, he was also the most solitary in spirit. His stoical asceticism and consistent vigour, his iron self-control and unconquerable resolution resulted from the transfusion of all personal desires, emotions, and ambitions into an almost superhuman faith in God and in his chosen work. Such characters are always branded “cold” or “hard” by

Character of
La Valette.

those who are themselves too cold to understand the perpetual self-sacrifice and deep devotion of which only a fiery and fervent soul is ever capable.

Death of La
Valette, 1568.

La Valette's death—of sunstroke and fever—on August 21st of 1568, was felt rather as a relief than as a loss by the deteriorating Knights of his community.

The terror of evil-doers, the implacable enemy of disorder, vice, and crime, pitiless to himself, and stern to others, he was, of all the many heroic Heads of the Order, the most completely qualified to conceive and carry out great enterprises—to build not for a century but for all time. His city, with its superb fortifications, is his lasting monument.

Deterioration of
the Order in
peace.

The corruption of which the Order had shown distressing symptoms during the declining years of La Valette's life was accelerated after his death; but mercifully the next great trumpet-call to arms came comparatively soon—before the poison had made incurable inroads; and at the battle of Lepanto, in 1571, the Hospitallers showed courage worthy of their finest traditions.

The call to
arms; revival
of old heroic
courage and
energy.

The combined Christian fleets, under the brilliant and heroic young Don John of Austria, encountered the entire naval forces of the Ottoman powers on October the 7th. As the two fleets approached nearer and nearer to each other, the Turks raised yells and shouts and bade their adversaries come on like beasts to be slaughtered. The Christians became silent, and at a given signal a crucifix was

raised aloft on every ship: the Captains and seamen, the Knights and men-at-arms, fell on their knees or bowed their heads in prayer. Then, in the same calm deliberate manner, they went to the guns. The sunshine sparkled impartially on the gorgeous attire of the terrible janissaries and on the helmets of the Christian Knights.

“We are here to conquer or die, as Heaven may judge fit,” said Don John. “Do not let our foe ask us ‘*Where is your God?*’—but so fight in God’s name that whether in death or victory you may earn eternal life.”

Then his bugles sounded out cheerily; and in a moment not only the two flagships but practically all the galleys were engaged in combat. The White Cross Knights were on the extreme right of the centre division of Don John’s line of battle; their ships were only three in number; and the Corsair Viceroy of Algiers, recognizing their banner and burning with hereditary hatred to the Order, singled them out for an attack in which he cut them off from the centre and believed the time had come when Allah would deliver them into his hands. The Hospitallers, outmanœuvred and outnumbered, fought superbly. Ramirez, a Spanish Knight, “though riddled with arrows like another Saint Sebastian,” continued fighting with desperate vigour until he fell dead from countless wounds; and the Prior, pierced with five arrows, was the only man left living on his vessel when the Algerines at last succeeded in boarding it. But the

Decisive battle
of Lepanto.
Great naval
victory of Don
John of Austria
over the Turks,
Oct. 7th, 1571.

triumph of the enemy was brief; for in Don John of Austria they met an adversary as resolute as the dead and unforgotten La Valette. The battle began at noon, and lasted only five hours.

That same evening there crept into Lepanto harbour nine and twenty shattered Turkish vessels—all that were left afloat of the 300 sail-of-the-line which started out so confident of victory.

Yet though the Turkish ships were routed or destroyed, and the material power of the Sultan crippled, the Turkish energy and spirit were by no means entirely extinguished, and therefore the naval contest between Cross and Crescent was resumed, though in a more desultory and intermittent fashion than hitherto.

During the late seventeenth century—over a hundred years subsequent to the naval victory of Don John of Austria—there was a perceptible revival of maritime activity among the White Cross Knights; for although the Order had lost much of its spiritual fire, there were still a few among the Knights who seemed to be survivals from a nobler age. Most attractive of these was the brilliant young Chevalier de Trémincourt, whose ability as a naval officer was as remarkable as his sympathetic charm of manner and distinguished personal appearance. Returning after a victorious fight, his ship was whirled into a frightful storm, one of those shrieking tempests which in the Mediterranean—even

The Chevalier
de Trémincourt, a brilliant
naval officer of
the Fleet of
St. John.

on the finest day—may break upon the hapless sailor suddenly, with no more prologue than an ominous murmuring of wave to wave, a snake-like hissing of the wind across the waters, and a chill withdrawal of the sun behind a heavy cloud.

In such a storm, the Chevalier de Trémincourt was shipwrecked on the coast of Africa, and seized by some Moors who were overjoyed to be able to send this White Cross Knight a prisoner to the Sultan Mahomed IV at Adrianople.

The Sultan, to whom Trémincourt's name and reputation were familiar, complimented him upon his naval and military exploits, and made to him the same offer which Saladin in 1187 had made to the Knights Hospitaller captured at the battle of Tiberias—the same offer which Solyman the Sublime (four hundred and nineteen years later) had made to Villiers de L'Isle Adam:—wealth, glory, favour, and a high command in the Turkish army if he would renounce the Cross.

Precisely as his predecessors had done, Trémincourt laconically refused.

Then the Sultan strove to tempt him by offering him a beautiful wife, a princess of the imperial family.

Trémincourt was a Frenchman; he was young, he was extremely handsome; and—be it remembered—had not been born in the Ages of Faith: not in the days of the Crusades; not even in the early sixteenth century while the Knights of the Cross were seeing visions of

The Sultan in the late 17th century makes the same offer to a White Cross Knight as his predecessors had made to the Hospitallers five hundred years earlier.

A drama of the soul.

St. John and of an army of white-robed angels bearing flaming swords.

This drama of the soul took place when Louis XIV was in the height of splendour at Versailles—when Charles II's Court at Whitehall was scandalizing the decorous John Evelyn; and when, despite the prevalence of vehement theological controversy between Catholics and Protestants, an elegant epicureanism and thinly-veiled scepticism were becoming increasingly fashionable in the world to which young Trémincourt belonged by birth. Yet he continued to say "No" to the Sultan's offers, in a manner as decisive as the most fiery Crusader of the twelfth or thirteenth century.

The Grand Turk grew exasperated, and for argument and rhetoric he substituted insult and torture. But Trémincourt remained no less impervious to cruelty than he had been to compliments. He was given a final choice: on the one hand, freedom, wealth, power, and all the good things of the world. On the other, torment, indignity, the life of a slave, incessant misery and degradation, until it should please the Sultan to end his sufferings by death.

Firmly though courteously Trémincourt continued to defy his captor.

Martyrdom of
Trémincourt.

He was led out and beheaded; and his body hurled disdainfully into the sea—the element upon which, in his brief brilliant career, he had achieved such bright renown.

About the time that Trémincourt at

Adrianople was rivalling the early Christian martyrs, a modish man of letters, sitting comfortably in London, was summing up in halting blank-verse what he believed to be the modern rule of life:

Contrast
between stand-
point of man of
action and man
of letters.

What is't we live for? Tell life's finest tale:
To eat, to drink, to sleep, love and enjoy,
And then to love no more. Only to tell
Of deeds not worth the doing; and to do
Deeds dreary in the telling.

How strange such flaccid "philosophy" must have seemed to such as Trémincourt! But there were not many Trémincourts; and during the eighteenth century the type became still rarer.

The spiritual fire of the Order, unfanned by crucial dangers,* flickered lower and lower; the old moral austerity became as obsolete as chain-mail armour; and with the decline of moral self-command came a proportionate loss of mental energy and physical vigour.

It is true that the vast revenues of the Order were still largely expended upon works of charity, that the Knights still wore their plain black gowns with the eight-pointed Cross upon their breasts, and that the Serving Brethren toiled in Hospital, where the halt, the blind, the lame, and the sick could still

* Towards the end of the seventeenth century the Turkish power was considerably diminished, after John Sobieski, King of Poland, in 1683 had driven the Sultan's forces out of Austria, beating them back from the very walls of Vienna. The King himself wrote to the Grand Master at Malta and described the victory.

Hospital at
Malta visited by
John Howard
the philan-
thropist.

find refuge. But even in the Hospital the former spirit of loving compassion, unsleeping zeal, and Christian devotion was waning. When the English philanthropist, John Howard, visited Malta and was taken to see the Hospital, he found it dreary, ill-cared-for, and uncomfortable.

In the Crusading days, while the enemy in Palestine kept thundering at the gates, the Hospital arrangements had been the admiration of Christendom; and in that turbulent age the medical knowledge, surgical skill, and unremitting toil of the Knights and Brethren in stemming disease and mitigating pain had been deservedly famous. But in the last years of the eighteenth century—the so-called “dawn of reason”—their medical capacity had declined as grievously as their moral character.

At the end of the thirteenth century, in Acre, that beautiful but depraved metropolis of Syrian Christianity, the Hospitallers had kept themselves aloof from corruption; but in Malta five centuries later they drifted with the stream. What Acre had been, Valetta was in danger of becoming—and the White Cross of St. John, no longer the outer symbol of an inner purity, lost its power of inspiration.

The French
Revolution.

Then came the French Revolution; and in 1792 news reached Malta that the demagogue masters of the situation—with that inverted exclusiveness so common to their type—had decreed that any Frenchman joining an Order of Knighthood requiring proofs of hereditary nobility should not be eligible for the blessings

of "liberty and fraternity." This was the preliminary to the suppression of the Order in France, and the confiscation of those revenues which for so many centuries had been administered *pro utilitate hominum*—an Order in which men of birth and position, who had possessed all the good things of the world, spontaneously renounced their great possessions and all personal ambition in order to devote their lives, their wealth and talents, to the service of faith and humanity.*

During the orgies of 1792 and 1793 in France, while vast numbers of the innocent suffered for the guilty, amidst this welter of horror there were Knights of St. John who showed a dignity, a firmness, and an uncompromising spirit worthy of the best traditions of the Order. "I see," said one of them, "that the time has come when a man of honour, in performance of his duty, may die as gloriously on the scaffold as on the field of battle."

But in Malta the French Knights of St. John had no ambition for the honour of martyrdom.

Their Grand Master de Rohan was not

Suppression of
the Order in
France by
Revolution-
aries.

* One of the many differences between the aristocratic Military Order of St. John as founded by Raymond du Puy in 1118 and the "progressive" revolutionaries of 1792 was that the aristocrats gave up their own possessions and poured out their own blood for the good of the community, whereas the political "regenerators" in 1792-93 seized other people's possessions, and copiously shed other people's blood, sending thousands of innocent men and women to the scaffold, all in the name of enlightenment and brotherly love.

Death of Grand
Master de
Rohan, 1797.

wholly forgetful of the old ideals; and he was personally urbane and kindly; conspicuous for generosity, compassion, and charity; but his character was agreeable rather than strenuous, and in 1791 he had been smitten with apoplexy, so that his broken health made him feel he was not destined to save the Order from its fast approaching doom. As he lay dying—on July the 13th, 1797—the Knights named to him his probable successor, the Bailiff von Hompesch. De Rohan sighed and said: "He is not the man for such a crisis as this; and I shall be the last to die Grand Master of an illustrious and independent Order."

Ferdinand Joseph Anthony Herman Lewis von Hompesch belonged to one of the noblest families of the Lower Rhine, and had been the Envoy of the Order at Vienna, and afterwards Grand Bailiff of Brandenburg. At the time he took up the duties of Grand Master he was only fifty-three, the youngest Grand Master who had been elected for centuries.

French Revolutionaries
resolve to annex
Malta.

By this time the French Directory, which had bitterly resented the independent sovereignty of the Knights of St. John at Malta, had decided to gain possession of this valuable strategic point; and on the "23rd Germinal of the year Six" (in plain language, on April 12th, 1798), it was secretly agreed that the Order, because of its hereditary Royalist and Catholic principles, could be regarded as opposed to the Republic, and might therefore be punished and the island annexed.

But a private supplementary decree set forth a cautious qualification:

The order given to General Bonaparte, Commander-in-Chief of the Army of the East . . . to obtain possession of the island of Malta, shall not be carried into effect by him unless he considers it feasible without risking the success of other operations confided to his charge.

Secret orders
to Napoleon
Bonaparte, 1798.

Although these instructions were private, the Grand Master received ample warning. The ambassador of the Order at the Congress of Rastadt wrote him a letter which was a veritable trumpet call to action:

I warn your Highness that the expedition now preparing at Toulon is intended against Malta and Egypt. . . . You will most certainly be attacked; take, therefore, all necessary measures for defence. The Ministers of all the Powers in alliance with the Order who are now here have received the same information as myself; but they know that Malta is impregnable, or at all events in a position to offer a resistance of three months' duration. Let your Eminent Highness be on your guard. Your own honour and the preservation of your Order are concerned. If you yield without a defence you will be lowered in the eyes of all Europe.

Grand Master
von Hompesch
warned of the
impending
attack.

His "Eminent Highness," however, had led a pleasant and easy life, and was ignorant of warfare; in his self-sufficiency he chose rather to listen to flowery reassurances than strenuous warnings.

On the 6th of June, 1798, a French fleet (of eighteen sail and seventy transports) appeared in sight. The Knights allowed a few frigates to enter the harbour. Three days later the main portion of the expedition arrived, under the command of General Bonaparte in person;

making in all fourteen sail-of-the-line, thirty frigates, and three hundred transports. The French Consul demanded entrance for the entire Fleet into the Grand Harbour.

Von Hompesch absurdly relies on the "peaceful intentions" of the enemy's fleet and army.

Von Hompesch and his Council replied that it was contrary to the treaty of 1768 to allow the entry of more than four ships of war at a time; and (despite the warning he had received) he relied upon the good faith and "peaceful intentions" of the French Republic.

The word "surrender" was not spoken among the Knights, and yet they neglected the most obvious precautions. Their Grand Master was worse than useless. The emissaries of the French Republic strolled openly about Valetta, pointing out to the apprehensive and indignant Maltese that it would be folly to attempt resistance when no preparation had been made for a siege, and there was obviously no leader capable of carrying out an organized defence.

On Sunday, June 10th, at four o'clock in the morning, General Bonaparte began the disembarkation of his army. By noon 15,000 men had landed and the island was in his hands.

Characteristic remark of Napoleon Bonaparte.

During the landing operations a few Knights defied the enemy sufficiently to be taken prisoners. They were brought before Bonaparte. "How could you believe it possible," said he, arrogantly, "that with a few wretched peasants you could defend yourselves from troops which have conquered nearly the whole of Europe?"

Apparently Von Hompesch did not believe it possible. He sat indoors in his palace, and gave no orders. One French Knight (Le Soubiras) and the Maltese militia had the initiative to attempt resistance, but their detached effort was not supported.

The same evening there was an angry Maltese mob howling Arabic curses in front of the Grand Master's palace, and several of the Knights were murdered by the populace.

At Rhodes in 1522 it had been the people who clamoured to the Knights that they must yield to Solyman; but in Valetta in 1798 it was the people who were burning to resist, and the Grand Master who—in defiance of their wishes—signed the capitulation treaty which delivered them over to an enemy they dreaded and abhorred. The Maltese walked helplessly about the streets, weeping with rage and grief. Oh, for one hour of Villiers de L'Isle Adam or La Valette! Of what avail were the impregnable fortifications, of what avail past glories and superb traditions, when the Order of the White Cross had abandoned them?

“How fortunate,” remarked one of Napoleon's staff, “that we had friends to open the gates. Otherwise a couple of dozen men could have held the city against us for many weary months!”

To hold it a few weeks would have sufficed. Nelson and the British Navy were not far away. Bitter was the wrath of the Maltese when they soon afterwards realized that had

Bitter indignation of the Maltese people against the incapable Grand Master von Hompesch, 1798.

their Teutonic Grand Master but closed the gates and waited a little longer, their independence would have been saved.*

In the spring of 1805, there lay dying at Montpellier, in the blue gown of a Penitent Brother, a weary old man, so poor he could not even pay the physicians who had tended him during his long and painful illness; nor had he any money with which to make provision for his funeral or order masses for his soul.

Death of the
69th Grand
Master, 1805.

He died on May 12th and was buried in the chapel of the Blue Fraternity.

This lonely and desolate pauper penitent was Ferdinand Joseph Anthony Herman Lewis von Hompesch, sixty-ninth, last, and unregretted Grand Master of the ruined Order of Knights Hospitaller of St. John of Jerusalem.

* It was not until 1814 that the Treaty of Paris confirmed the sovereignty of Great Britain over Malta.

Whereas the French Republican Government had mutilated the churches, destroyed many of the records, and endeavoured to discourage the Maltese even from remembering the Knights of St. John, the British erected in Valetta a new gateway surmounted by statues of Villiers de L'Isle Adam and La Valette.

The love of the Maltese and the voice of Europe have confirmed these islands to the possession of Great and unconquered Britain. A.D. 1814. Such is the inscription in Latin over the portico of the main guard-house in the centre of Valetta.



PART VI

IN MODERN EUROPE AND THE NEAR EAST: 1814-1918

LIKE the fabled phoenix, which consumes itself in flames and then is born anew from its own ashes, the Order of St. John had risen again and again after apparent ruin and destruction. The final dissolution of the ancient and world-famous military Order came not from without but from within. As long as the flame of faith and devotion burnt brightly in the souls of the Knights, in Palestine or Cyprus, Rhodes or Malta, no enemy could daunt them, no defeat could quench their ardour, no calamity could shatter their ideal of service. But as this spirit waned and paled, and the old martial fire flickered out, the Order crumbled; and the surrender of Malta by Von Hompesch to Napoleon was only the outward expression of an inner degeneracy which had carried in itself the seeds of spiritual death.

But though the sixty-ninth and last Grand Master was so utterly lacking in the old heroic vigour, though the fraternity at Malta had fallen away from their traditions, the Grand Prior in France had been conspicuous for dauntless fidelity to his faith and pledged

word when, amidst the orgies of the Revolution, chaos had come again.*

It was appropriate that from France came the first attempt to re-create the Order.

The Military Order of Raymond du Puy's foundation could never be restored either in France or England. No more would soldiers pledge themselves to a perpetual celibacy, to the renunciation of personal property and of that individual liberty which to the modern man is dearer than life itself. No longer was there any one great universal spirit of faith strong enough to unite the noblest warriors of all the European nations in brotherhood against a common foe. The menace of Islam to the Cross was no longer a constant cause of terror; and the Cross itself had been torn down by revolutionaries in France, who boasted that as they overthrew kings on earth, so would they dethrone the Majesty of Heaven.

But the decline of the maritime and

Contrast between 1814 and 1118.

* The modern French Republican no more defends the hideous treatment of Marie Antoinette by the Revolutionaries than the modern English Churchman excuses the burning of Joan of Arc.

One a queen and a woman of the world, the other an illiterate peasant—but a saint, inspired mysteriously with an astounding military genius—both in their different ways were victims to that spirit of demoniac cruelty which seems to pass in periodic waves over the world.

The Hospitallers were not among the persecutors of Joan of Arc; and in 1790-1793 were not only guiltless of treachery to the ruined King and Queen, but were ready with monetary aid, and strove thus to support Count Fersen's gallant but ill-fated attempt to rescue Marie Antoinette and Louis XVI from sufferings which were a disgrace to France.

military power of the Knights Hospitaller was the less unfortunate for the world at large, inasmuch as the British Navy was completing the punishment of those dreaded Barbary Corsairs whose power the Knights of Rhodes and Malta had broken but not entirely extinguished.

In Lord Exmouth's victory over the Dey of Algiers, piracy and the slave trade received at last their deathblow;* and, as a naval and military power, the Order of St. John in the early nineteenth century was no longer required to stem the tide of barbarism.

Lord Exmouth
and the British
Navy complete
the extirpation
of the Barbary
Corsairs,
August 26, 1816.

But though the work of the Order in its naval and military form was finished, or had fallen into other hands, the work of tending the sick and poor is never finished, nor are there ever too many—or enough—skilled workers.

Gérard's White Cross Brotherhood and Sisterhood in the eleventh century had been—as we have seen—of lay origin; and only

* After Napoleon was taken to St. Helena, Admiral Lord Exmouth was in command in the Mediterranean, where his vigour and ability enabled him to wring from the Turkish rulers of Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli, *a treaty abolishing the slavery of Christians*. It was when these treaties were violated that he made his famous punitive expedition against the Dey of Algiers (in 1816). The British Admiral was severely wounded, and his coat cut to pieces with grapeshot, but he survived to return home in triumph, and received the thanks of both Houses of Parliament. The battle of Algiers was one of the most brilliant and gallant achievements in the whole of our maritime history; yet so quickly do landmen forget what they owe to the Royal Navy that it may be doubted if even the members of the Anti-Slavery Society now remember Lord Exmouth's crucial victory.

developed into a Monastic Order after the Christian conquest of Jerusalem. The subsequent military foundation was brought about by sheer necessity. When the mighty warriors and wealthy noblemen of Europe formed a religious Knighthood for the protection of the Serving Brethren and Sisters, they were prompted by the conviction that unless the Order possessed a permanent army of defenders, it would in all human probability cease to exist. But for the strong arm of Knighthood, Brethren and patients must have lived in ceaseless fear of the Turcoman and Saracenic scimitars.

But after nearly eight hundred years the time had come again when it was expedient to consider the re-creation of the Order on the lines of the first foundation.

After the fall of Napoleon, such of the French Knights and Brethren as had survived assembled a Chapter-General and sent their representatives to the Congress of Vienna in 1814, and again in 1822. In 1826 they suggested the revival of the English Order of St. John, even though it had to be with modifications necessary to meet the views of the Church of England. The French Catholic delegate, the Chevalier de Chastelain, not only worked assiduously for this new foundation but was impowered to give it formal recognition; and in 1831 the re-constituted Order, with the King as its Sovereign Head—and with its titular Prior and sub-Prior, its Knights and Ladies of Justice, Knights of

Envoy of the Order of St. John at the Congress of Vienna, 1814 and 1822.

Revival of the Order in England in a modernised form, 1831.

Grace and Ladies of Grace, Prelates and sub-Prelates, Bailiffs and Commanders, and Serving Brothers and Sisters—undertook the honourable task of toiling to alleviate the miseries of the sick and helpless. Then followed the foundation and maintenance of cottage hospitals and convalescent homes, the forming of classes of instruction for the training of skilled nurses, the establishment of the St. John Ambulance Association in the large railway centres and chief mining districts, so that the railway men and colliery labourers might learn how to treat the victims of accidents in peace and make ready to tend sufferers from wounds in war.

The St. John
Ambulance,
1877.

Then a "Hospice and Ophthalmic Dispensary" was founded in Jerusalem, the Sultan contributing a gift of £900 (Turkish) towards the cost of building. Of this institution—established to try and mitigate the horrible sufferings caused in Palestine by the great prevalence of eye-diseases and woeful ignorance as to their treatment—a British General wrote enthusiastically in 1883:

Crowds of afflicted Syrians flock thither for relief, and as the work is strictly on a nonsectarian basis, no opposition is encountered. Of all the charitable operations now carried on by the [English] *langue* [of St. John] there is none that promises to effect so much real good as this, none which more closely copies the objects of the original founders of the Order.*

British
General's
eulogy of
Ophthalmic
Hospital
established by
the Order in
Jerusalem.

* Major-General Whitworth Porter's "History of the Knights of Malta," 2nd edition, 1883, p. 584.

In the
Austrian
Empire.

In the Austrian Empire—where many of the Knights had sought a home after the surrender of Malta—an envoy from the Order of Saint John took his place among members of the Diplomatic Corps, and it was the Emperor of Austria who had the nominating of a Grand Master resident in Rome. In Bohemia the Priory of St. John of Jerusalem has maintained the work of charity and piety ever since its foundation in the Middle Ages. In Prussia—the last of European principalities to be converted to Christianity—a Bailiwick of Brandenburg had been established in 1160 by the Margrave Albert “the Bear” on his return from the Holy Land. This Bailiwick remained subject to the control of the Austro-Bohemian Grand Prior, who also had jurisdiction over the branch establishments in Hungary, Poland, and Denmark. In the course of a somewhat stormy existence the Order underwent several changes and suppressions, but was revived in its modern form in 1852, and we hear of its services on both sides during the campaign of Prussia against Austria in 1866 (when the defeat of the Austrian army at Königgratz laid the foundations of that new Prussian Empire which was ultimately to undermine and wreck the ancient “Holy Roman” Empire of Austria).

In Prussia.

In Poland and
Denmark.

Austrian
disaster at
Königgratz,
1866.

At the International Conference at Berlin in 1869, the Austrian delegate of the Order of Saint John (*l'Ordre Souverain et Militaire de*

Malte) began his speech by a reference to the historic origin and "glorious past" of the Order; and in all the various wars of the nineteenth century the modern representatives of the White Cross Knights and Brethren under various flags endeavoured to maintain the ancient and honourable traditions of their predecessors.

Under the French Republic the Order was not allowed to hold any lands; and only a few antiquarians remembered how sublime and splendid had been its work *pro Fide pro utilitate hominum*. In 1910, however, an *Association des Chevaliers Français* began preparations for possible service during the approaching world-war which General de Castelnau and other experienced soldiers foresaw and predicted.

In the British Isles, and in India, Canada, Australia, and the other Oversea Dominions, the work was carried on with steadfast and zealous care. In the South African war many of the brave orderlies of St. John met their deaths heroically rescuing the wounded under fire; and subsequently during times of peace the ambulance workers so toiled and trained that in August 1914, when the long-threatened German menace materialized with seeming suddenness, the nurses and orderlies were ready to set out in thousands, labouring in the same spirit of compassion as their mediaeval prototypes, expending ungrudging service upon friend and foe alike, bringing healing to

In 20th-century
France.

In the British
Empire.

Heroism of St.
John orderlies in
S. Africa.

Efficiency and
promptitude;
August, 1914.

the wounded, comfort to the dying, and moral reinforcement to the strong.*

Of the doctors who went to France with the St. John Ambulance and the Red Cross (many of whom subsequently joined the R.A.M.C.), not all were born in the British Isles; some came from Canada, Australia, and South Africa.

Order of St.
John joins
forces with the
Red Cross,
October, 1914.

In October 1914 the Order of St. John and the Red Cross very wisely joined forces; and to study their combined record is to be freshly impressed with the vigorous initiative, the innate organizing ability, the courageous readiness to shoulder heavy responsibility, so characteristic of our race at its best.

So great was the anxiety to join that the task of selection was one of unusual difficulty. Many nurses offered their services without salary. Some 2000 names were put on the books provisionally, and from these were chosen Units for Foreign Service, as well as Nurses required for the Auxiliary Hospitals at home. . . . At the time when the Joint War Committee took over the control of the Trained Nurses Department of the British Red Cross Society and of the St. John Ambulance Association, the enemy was on the point of completing the occupation of Belgium. Antwerp had

* No mere brief *résumé* can give an adequate idea of the work of the Order during the world-war; this can be studied in detail in the admirably arranged "Reports by the Joint War Committee and the Joint War Finance Committee of the British Red Cross Society and the Order of St. John of Jerusalem in England, on Voluntary Aid rendered to the Sick and Wounded at Home and Abroad, and to British Prisoners of War, 1914-1919." Published by H.M. Stationery Office, 1921 (823 pages, folio), 12s. 6d. net (quoted henceforth as "Reports . . . on Voluntary Aid").

fallen a fortnight before, and many of the British Nurses who had been working in Belgium were still retained as prisoners of war. In proportion as the area of hostilities increased, the needs of the Nursing Service grew. Though the greater part of Belgium was now almost entirely in the hands of the enemy, there was an increasing volume of work to be done in France and Flanders. But after the fall of Antwerp the claims of the Home Service became increasingly urgent.

In Belgium,
France, and
Flanders.

There was, as we have said, a constant demand by nurses to be sent to the Front, and it became necessary to explain that the "Front" was wherever there were sick and wounded, and that the nurses who served in the hospitals of Southampton or London were as effectively working at the Front as their sisters in Flanders. Wounded men were transferred to home hospitals within a few hours of being picked up on the battlefields.*

The Serbian appeal for help, early in 1915, was met with willing promptitude, and the enormous difficulties were surmounted with a resoluteness reflecting the highest credit upon those who faced and coped with all the horrors of modern war without themselves having the relief of fighting.

In Serbia.

That Malta, so rich in memories of the White Cross Knights, would become again a centre of activity, seemed probable to certain British naval and military officers who had followed closely the course of events in the Near East. This is not the place to enlarge on regrets over the disregard of the sound strategic advice which would have prevented enormous loss of life at Gallipoli. When—

In the Near
East, 1915.

* "Reports . . . on Voluntary Aid," Part V, pp. 82-83.

instead of an invasion by land, for which the Turks were unprepared—the gallant but ill-starred naval operations at the Dardanelles, and the ever-memorable landing, led to such tragically heavy casualties, a nursing service was promptly equipped for Gallipoli. Earlier in the year the G.O.C. the Egyptian Expeditionary Forces had enquired as to hospital accommodation in Malta; and under the presidency of the Governor, Field Marshal Lord Methuen, the White Cross and the Red were already making provision for probable emergencies.

In April of 1915 the bed accommodation in the Military Hospitals in Malta was 824; in May, 4,412; in June, 7,143; in August, 11,568; and by December it had reached 18,109. The first convoy of 600 cases from Gallipoli arrived on May 4, 1915; and before the end of the month the numbers had risen to nearly 4,000. The Tigné and St. George's Barracks were converted into hospitals; but they did not suffice, so private initiative again was required. Among those who gave their houses was the Marchesa Sicluna, whose summer palace (with the picturesque name of Dragonara) became an officers' hospital.

"A band of ladies met each hospital ship, welcomed every wounded and sick soldier," and "their energy never flagged in spite of the boiling heat of the docks in summer, or the cold of the winter months." The authorities gratefully testified that the local helpers "did much to lighten the labours of the

Wounded from
Gallipoli. Some
significant fig-
ures, April-
May, 1915.

hospitals," and to promote convalescence and recovery of many patients.*

The Manoel, Spinola, and Ricasoli Hospitals and the Convalescent Camps at Ghaïen and Tuffieha, were the more needed as, before the evacuation of Gallipoli, news arrived of the beginning of hostilities in Salonika. In the first week of July, 1916, 718 sick and wounded were landed in Malta; in the second week, 1,918; in the third, 2,605; and in the fourth week, 2,587; and the autumn again brought another large influx of malaria patients from Salonika.

Increasing number of casualties from Salonika; July, 1916.

From 1915 down to May 1919, some 200,000 men of all ranks were treated in the Malta Hospitals. A library was instituted for each hospital;† and Field Marshal Lord

Libraries for hospitals.

* Report, Part XIX, The Malta Commission.

† Not only in Malta, but in all its areas of activity the Order of St. John concerned itself with the minds as well as the bodies of the sufferers. At Surrey House (lent by Lady Battersea) Mrs. Gaskell and Mr. Beresford Melville had founded in August 1914 the "War Library," parent of those excellent "Camps Libraries" subsequently organized by The Hon. Mrs. Anstruther and General Sir Edward Ward. Despite willing aid from many, the cost of the enterprise so increased that in the autumn of 1915 the Joint War Committee of the Red Cross and of St. John took over the financial responsibility for the War Library which (with its fifty or so of voluntary workers and its paid secretarial staff) sent forth books—all kinds, from Shakespeare and the Bible down to the current periodicals—to France, Mesopotamia, Egypt, Malta, Palestine, Salonika, Italy, and Bombay. From each centre the various local hospitals were kept supplied with printed matter to suit all tastes. This War Library, brought into existence by the private initiative of Mrs. Gaskell, C.B.E., was too valuable an institution to be allowed to die. It survives as the "The War and Peace Hospital Library," 48 Queen's Gardens, Lancaster Gate, London, W.2.

The Soldier-
Governor:
Field-Marshal
Lord Methuen.

Methuen, "by act and deed displayed his interest in every undertaking, both big and small." He lent part of the Palace as offices for the Order of St. John and the Red Cross—that stately and beautiful Palace which once to have seen is never to have forgotten—and the inspiring and sympathetic presence of this distinguished soldier-Governor was no less cheering to the civilian workers than to the wounded or invalided combatants, who had cause also for gratitude to Colonel Sir Courtauld Thomson, Chief Commissioner for Malta and the Near East, and to Lieut.-Colonel Ashley, C.B.E.

"Generosity, kindness, and sympathy," as well as promptitude and skill, were the watchwords of the workers; and the reputation of the eight-pointed Cross (lowered in the early nineteenth century by the complacent pacifist laziness of Grand Master von Hompesch) was in our own time raised to a prestige that reminded the living nurses and orderlies how they were the moral representatives of an Order the exploits of which had once resounded throughout Christendom. So it was—and not for the first time in history—that war restored what "peace" had for a while destroyed.

The charm of
Malta.

The peculiar charm of Malta—with its streets of stairs, its brightly coloured shrines, its mysterious shuttered windows with their carved stone balconies, its churches and its palaces, its fortifications and its many relics of the great defence against the Turks—

tempts one to linger over thoughts of our own sick and wounded recovering in surroundings so rich in historic interest. But, on the track of the old Knights of St. John, we must pass to Palestine, the homeland of the first foundation of the Order.

Not the least pleasing feature of the Official Report is the series of maps and charts illustrating the area of the work of mercy which went hand in hand with the exploits of valour. The fighting in Egypt, and the advance of our armies from the borders of the Suez Canal, through the Sinai Peninsula, to Palestine and Syria; the campaign of the modern Crusaders, and their capture of Jerusalem, Damascus, and Aleppo, is a story so thrilling, so epic in quality, so rich in gallant incident (as well as ever-memorable strategy and tactics) that the fate of the officers and men wounded or invalided during this especial phase of the Great War has a particular attraction for those who have followed in imagination the pioneer efforts of the ancestral military Order founded after the Christian conquest of Jerusalem in 1099. In the first Crusade, to Godfrey de Bouillon and the French belonged the chief glory in Palestine; but we have already seen how the Holy City was lost after his death, and how (in 1191) French, Austrian, and Italian jealousies were the factors which not only deprived our English King Richard the Lion Heart of the fruits of his victory at Arsouf, but also prevented

Epic achievements of our modern Crusaders.

Twenty-third
Capture of Jeru-
salem. General
Allenby's entry
as deliverer;
December 11,
1917.

Christian, Mos-
lem, Hindu, and
other warriors of
the British Em-
pire united
against Turks
and Germans.

Special
Hospitals for
Indians accord-
ing to caste and
creed.

the Allied re-capture of Jerusalem. Very appropriate was it, therefore, that after seven hundred and twenty-six years it should fall to the lot of a British General to enter the Holy City as deliverer. Richard Cœur de Lion—who was personally better appreciated by his Mahomedan adversary, the brilliant and generous Saladin, than by some of his “most Christian” but most envious and inconstant Allies—would have been gratified could he have foreseen that the British General, fated to achieve this predestined triumph, was to include in his army not only soldiers from all parts of the British Isles, and vast numbers of spirited and dashing Light Horsemen from a far-away continent unknown to the mediaeval knights,* but also stately warriors from India, warriors of many races and creeds, including even descendants of Mahomed. In the contest against the Turks and their masters and allies the Prusso-Germans, history will record the exploits of the regular Indian Cavalry and the Imperial Service Cavalry raised by loyal feudatory Princes and placed at the service of our King-Emperor. Not only in the Egypt, Sinai, and Palestine campaign, but previously in France, special hospitals for the Indian troops had been organized with an exact regard for the particular requirements of each different caste and creed. Men are not “all equal”; it would be nearer the

* *Terra Australis incognita.*

truth to say they are "all different"; and the unity in diversity which we mean by the words "British Empire" is seen afresh by readers of the "Reports . . . on Voluntary Aid."

The St. John Ambulance and Red Cross workers, by their zeal, loyalty, and eager efficiency, were fit to be brethren to our fighting men to whom we owe our safety, life, and more than life. Not the least crucial part of the world contest took place in Egypt and the Holy Land. Had the combined forces of Germany and Turkey succeeded in their plan of campaign, which was to recapture Baghdad, drive our forces into the Persian Gulf, "deliver" Egypt and control the Suez Canal—"the jugular vein of the British Empire,"*—had they beaten us in Palestine, and swept as conquerers into India (which they rashly boasted beforehand they would speedily accomplish)—had "Hadji Guilloum" (the Kaiser) been able to command the vast resources of the Orient, the whole course of history necessarily must have been quite different. "If it would be over-stating the facts to say the world-war was won in Palestine, it is beyond dispute that General Allenby's absolute triumph made the Allied victory certain. . . . His strategy was based on a masterly appreciation of the situation not merely in his own theatre of

World-significance of contest in Egypt and Palestine, 1915-1918.

Results of General Sir Edmund Allenby's crucial victory.

* "The Desert Mounted Corps," by Lt.-Col. The Hon. R. M. Preston, D.S.O. (Constable, 1921), pp. 1-2.

operations but on the whole of the European fronts."*

On all these different fronts the St. John Ambulance and the Red Cross were working to enable the wounded to return to the fight, or to try and ease the sufferings of those whose fighting powers were irrevocably shattered.

It would be a proud task to follow the track of the White Cross and the Red to Salonika and Corfu, to Italy, Russia, and Roumania, to Montenegro, Mesopotamia, and even to Northern Persia; but this brief tribute is in no way intended to save the public the trouble of reading the Reports. On the contrary, it is intended to direct attention to a certain folio volume which (despite its official nature and its necessarily statistical and laconic methods of expression) contains (for those who read between the lines) material for many a romance of reality, many a poem, many a character sketch in which the eternal principles of Christian chivalry shine out amidst the devastating horrors of our modern warfare; the spirit of duty, self-sacrifice, and gallant resolute endeavour suffusing the whole with a bright light which should inspire those who are yet to come to labour as nobly *pro Fide, pro utilitate hominum*.

A brief tribute
to a great work

* "Allenby's Final Triumph," by W. T. Massey (Constable, 1920), p. 1.

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Edward P.

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PART VII

THE PRIORY FOR WALES

Founded 1918

Titular Prior: H.R.H. THE PRINCE OF WALES, K.G.

Sub-Prior: THE RT. HON. THE EARL OF PLYMOUTH, P.C.,
G.B.E., C.B.

Acting Sub-Prior: SIR OWEN PHILIPPS, G.C.M.G., M.P.

Chancellor: THE PRIME MINISTER (THE RT. HON. D. LLOYD
GEORGE, P.C., M.P.).

The Order bears a proud and splendid record, with great traditions running like a golden thread through the fabric of history. We want to carry on those fine traditions, and to create fresh records.

Speech of the Acting Sub-Prior, at
the Lord Mayor's luncheon at Cardiff;
St. David's Day, 1919.

"THE motives of our Order run parallel to the best and greatest teachings of all nations. The War has made us all realize how closely related we are to and how dependent on one another; and now that the War is over, may our work continue to be conducted in the same spirit. . . ." * Thus—in summing up the wide and varied activities of the Priory for Wales—spoke the Principal Secretary, Mr. Herbert Lewis, to whose "indefatigable energy, enthusiasm, and skill" the Order of St. John of Jerusalem owes so large a debt of gratitude.

The question, I believe, is frequently asked, said the Sub-Prior, "What is the Priory for Wales of the Order of St. John, and what does it do?" . . . The Order's Association with Great Britain, and with Wales in particular, goes back many

* Annual Report of the Commissioner for Wales (Herbert D. W. Lewis, O.B.E., Knight of Grace), 1920.

centuries. Evidences of its activities are extant in the oldest Welsh Records, and its ancient remains may be seen to-day both in North and South Wales. In more recent times the work was carried on under the style of the St. David's Centre of the Order, which included practically all Wales; but some ten years ago a movement was begun for the creation of a Priory for Wales. As the Welsh national feeling in this direction grew and crystallized, the Grand Prior of the Order in England, H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught, acting on the recommendation of the Chapter-General, met the wishes of the people of Wales by constituting a Welsh Priory. . . . H.R.H. The Prince of Wales signified his willingness to become the Prior.

The first meeting of the Welsh Chapter in 1918 was held in the old headquarters of the English Order, St. John's Gate, Clerkenwell, the scene of so many significant events in the past history of the Knights of St. John;* and afterwards the Acting Sub-Prior purchased and presented to the Order the ancient and disused Hospice of St. John at Bridgend, where the Eagle of St. John and the eight-pointed Cross carved centuries ago still mutely symbolize the activities of the mediaeval Knights and Serving Brethren.

Past and present are being linked in many ways; and in 1920 the Order received a gift of five thousand pounds from the Marquess of Bute, and acquired from the Bute estate "a magnificent site" in Cathays Park close by the old Greyfriars Priory, where a building "appropriate to the traditions of the ancient Order"† is to be erected as a centre for the present activities extending and ever increasing throughout Wales.

Though the St. John Ambulance work in Wales had been carried on during many years of peace, it was the Great War that revealed the high degree of vigour and efficiency which had been attained. In August 1914, when the military authorities asked for a detachment of trained Orderlies for duty in France, Mr. Herbert Lewis swiftly gathered them together from amongst the existing workers, and before the end of the

* See Part IV, *ante*.

† Address by the Acting Sub-Prior, 1 March 1920.

month he had taken them over to Nantes. Thus it happened that he served on the staff of the D.D.M.S. (Colonel Sinclair Westall, C.B., C.M.G.) during the epic Retreat from Mons. The subsequent raising of a Field Ambulance for the Welsh Army Corps; the laying of a special road for motor ambulance cars at Boulogne from the Casino to the railway station, the erection of a hospital at Etaples, the establishment of various military hospitals in Wales, and, after the war, the founding of hostels for the discharged—these are among the valuable works superintended and in many cases initiated by the Principal Secretary, who in his terse but comprehensive Reports takes the opportunity of paying generous tribute to the helpers who so willingly toiled with and under him.

The Bishop of St. David's, preaching at a thanksgiving service at St. John's Church, Cardiff, addressed the modern members of the Order in a manner reminiscent of the warrior priests of old. "Let us run with patience the race that is set before us; looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith" * was his text; and he bade his audience never neglect the high standard "inspired by the memories and traditions of the past." Giving praise and honour to the "wonderful spirit" of our sailors and soldiers of all ranks, the Bishop emphasized that "all this devotion to duty, and comradeship in sacrifice, which won the war, was still needed now in time of peace"; the patriotic spirit, the religious fervour, the sympathy, the faith and the self-abnegation—so nobly manifested during the stupendous fight of 1914-18—must not be allowed to flag or fail now that visible victory had been gained. That this admonition did not fall on deaf ears is obvious from the Annual Reports; and no one has more warmly appreciated the strenuous labours of the Priory for Wales than the Prior, H.R.H. the Heir to the Throne. On his memorable recent visit to Cardiff (June 1921), the Prince of Wales—who was received with that spontaneous enthusiasm his presence evokes in all parts of our Empire—spoke briefly but adequately: "This is my first ap-

* Hebrews, xii, 1, 2.

pearance as Prior of the Priory for Wales, a position I am very proud to hold, as I take a great interest in all works for the alleviation of human suffering."

Opening the hostel established for disabled ex-Service men, and inspecting the Ambulance Brigade, H.R.H. alluded gracefully to the "old traditions of the Order" and commended the "devoted service" of the present workers. "*The Priory*," he said, "*is a Welsh National Institution*;"—and these words found an echo in many loyal hearts throughout the length and breadth of Wales.



CONCLUSION

"PRISONERS AND CAPTIVES"

DURING the Great War, many a British sailor and soldier while scorning to fear death, yet dreaded a German or a Turkish prison. To be interned in Austria, or captured by Austrian troops, was another matter, for the Austrian traditions of courtesy and chivalry remained alive even after the ancient Empire was undermined and doomed.* But the spirit of chivalry—as Froissart remarked very long ago—has never been native to Prussia. Nor would any but an incorrigible optimist look for it in Turkey. Therefore, of the many men-of-action whose determined vigour saved us from the threatened Teuton-Turco domination, none were so urgently in need of aid and sympathy as the enormous number of prisoners of war whose sufferings (varying with the characters of the individual enemy commanders), included in many cases humiliations, agonies, and torments which elevated these captives to the rank of martyrs.

The civilian public in Great Britain—regardless of history, and inclined to impute to other nations their own temperamental inclination to mercy—were slow at first to realize the situation. Moreover, the most terrible details were for a while concealed from them. But certain private individuals, awakening to the

* The Order of St. John in Austria not only kept up its activities during the war, but is now endeavouring to cope with the miseries of the post-revolution conditions. "C'est ainsi, alors que la guerre semait la douleur et le deuil parmi presque toutes les Nations de l'Europe, que les Chevaliers de l'Ordre Souverain Militaire et International de Malte accomplissaient, à l'ombre de la blanche croix octogonale, leur mission bienfaisante sur tous les champs de bataille. . . . Et aujourd'hui l'Ordre voue tous ses efforts à la constitution des œuvres stables de charité et de bienfaisance." Speech of the Austrian Delegate at the Tenth International Conference of the Red Cross, Geneva, 1921.

facts, set to work to organize a "Prisoners of War Help Committee," which struggled on for some time as a voluntary organization. In the autumn of 1916, however, the work of this Help Committee was taken over by the Joint Committee of the Order of St. John and the Red Cross; and at the end of the year new and improved arrangements were made for sending food and other necessities to civilian prisoners of war, of whom there were then (approximately) in Germany, 5,600; in Austria, 280; in Turkey, 120.

Extra to the relief work for prisoners of war in Germany, during the period covered by the operations of the Central Committee, there were some 5,358 British military prisoners of war in the hands of the Turks and Bulgars—not counting Indian prisoners "many of whom never reached the prison camps in Turkey in Asia at all." Those who did survive the march across the desert were in a state which even the studiously laconic and restrained Report describes as "terrible in the extreme":

Until their arrival, the officer prisoners of war had been at Angora and Afioun-Kara-Hissar, together with those of the Yeomanry captured at Katia on Easter Day, 1916.

When about 250 officers of the Kut garrison arrived, additional camps were opened for their accommodation at Yozgad and Kastamuni in Northern Asia Minor. . . . The mortality during the months of June to October, 1916, had been appalling, since, at a low estimate, half the total number of the garrison died between Kut and the Taurus Mountains, of starvation, ill-treatment, sickness, or exhaustion.*

Very different was our treatment of the Turkish prisoners whom we captured in Palestine, to whom we gave food and medical aid precisely the same as to our own sick and wounded. (A time came when many Turks grew weary of fighting for the Germans, and preferred to surrender to us, in certainty of getting courtesy and regular meals.)

The British prisoners in Turkey included those captured at Gallipoli, and in Mesopotamia, Egypt and Palestine, and also the crews of various submarines. The Committee's task of sup-

* Reports, etc., Part XXIX, C.P. of War Committee, p. 569.

plying food and clothing to these captives was complicated by the extreme difficulty of obtaining reliable information, and also by the fact that a parcel might take five, ten, or even eighteen months to reach its destination. These delays were due partly to Turkish procrastination, but subsequently also to the chaotic state into which Austria was plunged after the dismemberment of that once great Empire—the Empire which from the early Middle Ages up to the late seventeenth century had been the bulwark of Western Europe against wave after wave of Turkish aggression.

To understand all the work done by the Central Prisoners of War Committee, it is necessary to study the forty-four folio pages of small print which constitute the Official Report. The Report, however, necessarily restricts itself to the briefest mention even of the most distinguished workers. Of many who toiled to aid the wounded and the prisoners, one who most signally radiated hope and strength was Adeline, Duchess of Bedford.* Plato's definition of the heroic character, “tenderness with great spirit,” is particularly applicable to her; for so wide and deep were her sympathies, so acute her capacity to feel the griefs of others and carry the burdens of those she laboured to relieve, that she lived at a higher rate of intensity than average human beings. “Great hearts are glad when it is time to give”—and she was always giving. She gave more than her intellect, her influence, her strength, her wealth; she gave her heart and soul to every task she undertook. After August 1914 her activities, always strenuous, were infinitely multiplied. As Chairman of the Ladies Committee of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem, her organizing powers, both before and after the amalgamation with the Red Cross, proved invaluable. Her life-long principle of thoroughness prompted many fatiguing visits to the Western Front:

I went from hospital to hospital [she wrote in 1914 after returning from Boulogne], seeing these wrecked and suffering

* Chairman of the Ladies Committee of the Order of St. John; and subsequently also Chairman of the Inter-departmental Committee for Prisoners of War (at Thurloe Place).

beings, each one more maimed than another, but with a spirit and faith that shone in their faces and made them great. . . . All the men who came from headquarters were most hopeful ; but the wounded know only their own trench or trenches and say they make no way. It is rather a parable of life !*

During her tireless efforts she seemed never to think of rest or relief for herself. Nor did the cessation of hostilities bring repose to her, for it was her habit to meet and welcome the returning prisoners of war, as they landed, and to inquire into their needs and help them in all their difficulties.

My work has trebled since the Armistice [she explained, in November 1918, to an intimate friend]. Repatriated prisoners arrive three and four times a day now, instead of once or twice a week at most. . . . Probably in two or three months they may all be here. Meanwhile I must work day and night.

Like Spenser's angels, she toiled "all for love and nothing for reward"; and there can be little doubt that her life was shortened by the continuous pressure she put upon herself during and after the Great War. Her sudden death (of heart failure) came as a shock to all who laboured with or under her. The loss is irreparable. "It is as if a great light has gone out of the world," said an obscure worker; and to all who were reinforced and comforted by her noble faith, her queenly dignity, her unfailing graciousness, her wonderful smile of encouragement to the disheartened or the weary, it seemed that she was in truth the incarnation of that Spirit of Chivalry which was and is the soul and strength and inspiration of the ancient heroic Order of St. John of Jerusalem.



* Letter to E. M. Tenison.

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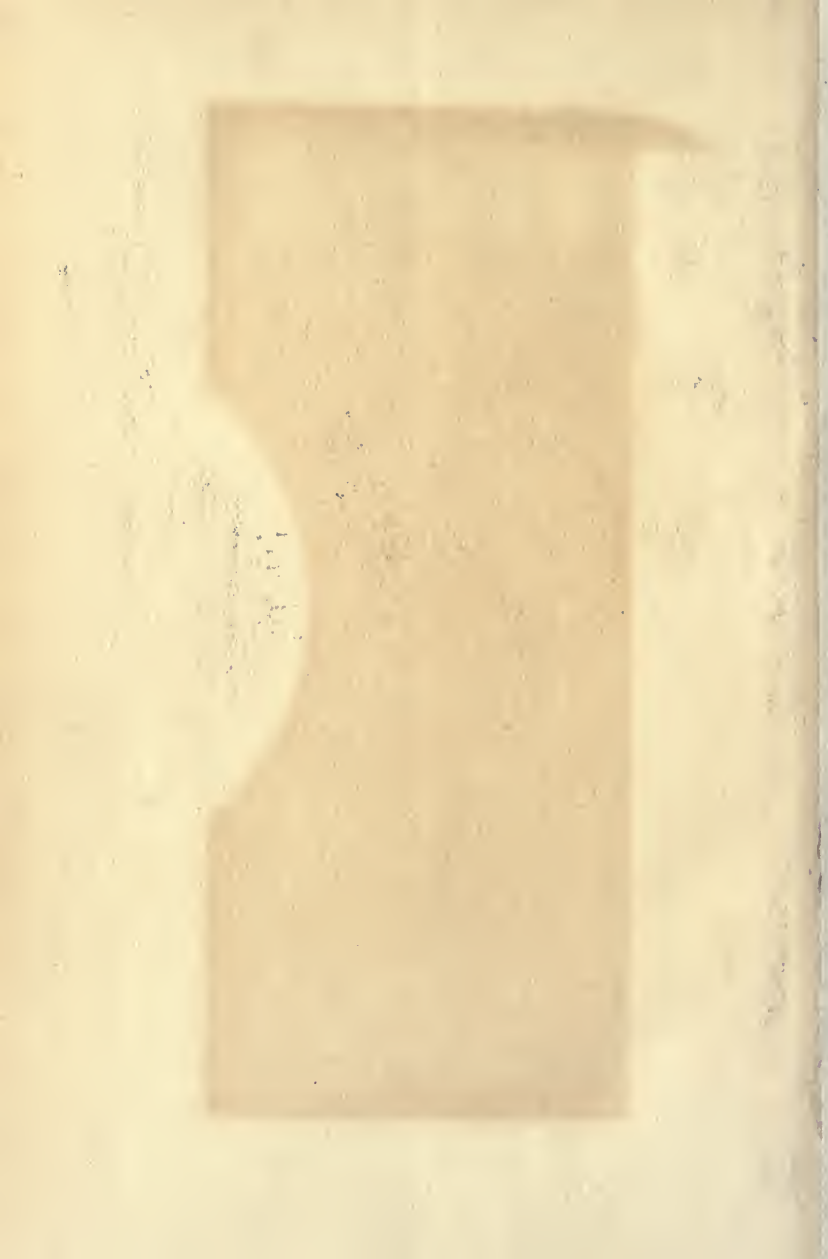
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